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Christie's Home-Making. FRONTISPIECE.

CHRISTIE'S HOME-MAKING.

A SEQUEL TO

CHRISTIE'S NEXT THINGS.

BY

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CHRISTIE'S HOME-MAKING.

CHAPTER I.

FINIS.

It is the month of roses again, and the air is as laden with their fragrant breath as on the day when we first made Christie's acquaintance, three years ago. The soft June twilight is gathering, and Christie, after a busy day, has curled herself up in her favorite attitude upon the broad low window-seat, to rest her tired feet and hands and have a little time for quiet thought.

She has much to think of to-night. It is the last time that as Christie Gilbert she will spend an evening in this room, with all its dainty girlish belongings, that has been her own special nook in her home.

An open trunk stands at the foot of the bed, and there is an orderly disorder prevailing everywhere, that suggests unusual preparation and hints of departure. In the room beyond, through the half-closed door, you catch glimpses of billowy masses of white lying on the bed, and the filmy mistiness of a floating veil which is all in readiness for the bride.

No wonder that Christie's bright girlish face wears an unusually thoughtful look, as in the quiet hush after the stir of preparation which has made the day one busy whirl she realizes that very soon the word Finis will be written at the end of her girlhood, and a new life, with new cares and responsibilities, and new happiness, too, will begin.

The twenty years which she has seen of life have been very happy sheltered ones, and with all her bright anticipations for the unknown future which stretches before her, it is not strange that Christie's heart is full to overflowing to-night with a clinging tenderness for the home love which has been tried and true for so many years. Not that she distrusts the new love for which she is going to give up her place in the home circle, and go away to make a new home and new friends. No, Christie, in her unconsciousness of her lovable disposition, wonders how it ever came to pass that she should have been chosen above all others to share the life of the talented young minister whom Weston is proud to claim as one of her children, and she trusts too fully and perfectly in his love to feel one doubt of her happiness as his wife. She doubts with a loving humility whether she will be able to make him happy. Whether she will be the helpmeet that he should have in his work, and whether he will not outgrow her, so that as the years go on she will become less and less a part of his life, instead of being more to him; but she does not doubt that his love will al-

ways be, as it is now, the very crown of her happy life.

It is no disloyalty to the man with whom her life will be united to-morrow, that makes her cling to-night, with a new sense of its sweetness, to the home of her girlhood and the mother-love that has sheltered her so tenderly from every trouble. There was an unusual degree of companionship between this mother and daughter, and Christie knew that she would miss the loving counsel to which she had been accustomed to turn in every emergency.

The sound of voices floated down the street and broke in upon Christie's meditations. She recognized them at once, as we do, for it is the class that we met for the first time when they were all about to leave their school-days behind them, and who have grown closer together in the years that have passed since then, instead of drifting apart, as school friends so often do, in spite of loyal resolutions. "Christie, may we come up-stairs?" called Louise, and hardly waiting for Christie's cordial assent, they trooped up the stairs, bringing with them an atmosphere that dispelled at once Christie's thoughtful mood.

"I am glad Howe isn't here this evening," said Elsie Dunning, as the girls seated themselves on the chairs and floor and bed, as their fancy dictated. "It is ever so much nicer to have you all to ourselves this last evening, and when he is going to have you all the time so soon, he can afford to let us have one

more hour together. How soon you will be beyond our reach!"

"Oh, Christie, we shall miss you so," said Louise Rushton, who had thrown herself on the floor beside Christie, and was holding her friend's hand in her own. "I don't know what we shall ever do without you. To think that you should have been the first to break the magic circle, and be wooed and won, and leave us. If it was anyone but Howe Stanley, we simply wouldn't let you go; but Howe is such a splendid fellow, that he comes nearer to deserving you than anyone else possibly could."

"Oh, Louise, don't talk such nonsense," protested Christie, with a blushing face.

"It isn't nonsense," persisted Louise. "Is it, girls? You haven't half as good an opinion of yourself as you ought to have, Christie, and I consider it my duty to enlarge your bump of self-esteem a little before you leave us and my opportunity will be over. You have been a help to us all, and I don't believe I have done one decent thing for the last three years that has not been in some way by your influence or example. You ought to consider it your duty to stay here in Weston and keep me in order, lest when you go away I should forget all that you have impressed upon me, and 'go to the bow-wows,' as the immortal Mantalini has it."

"If you are not old enough to keep yourself in order, Louise, I will appoint myself a committee of one to look after you," said Elsie Dunning.

"Christie, I shall try to make her more sensible before you see her again. It will be a hard task, but I shall want something to occupy my mind and keep me from missing you too much. Do you know, somehow it seems more like our graduation eve tonight than anything else. I suppose it is because just the same set of us have been making preparations for the important event, and we are all to figure in the ceremony."

"Lay figures, though," laughed the irrepressible Louise. "Bridesmaids are a very unimportant part of a wedding; they may add a little to the decorations just as the flowers do, but they are not by any means indispensable. I am glad that you wanted us all, though, Christie, for we have been together in everything ever since we were little toddlers, and it seems natural to be with you in this great event. Are you frightened? How do you feel, anyway? I should think it would scare you to death to look forward to being a minister's wife. I know it would frighten me so that I should never survive the ceremony."

"It would frighten any one to think of your being a minister's wife," said Elsie, who was very fond of teasing. "Such a harum-scarum as you are would upset a church in no time. For my part I think that Christie is just the very one to be a minister's wife. She loves to go and see sick people and old ladies, I am sure she has a talent for leading missionary meetings that only needs to be developed, and

she has kept us girls in such good order that I know she could manage a churchful nicely."

"Elsie, stop!" exclaimed Louise. "Christie is turning pale, you are drawing such a dreadful picture of what is before her. She will think that missionary meetings and old women are to be the general occupations of her life, with Sunday-school and cooking classes mingled in for diversion. If you keep on, you will frighten her so effectually that there will be no bride to-morrow, and we shall have to put our bridesmaids' gay attire away for another occasion. As no one seems to be pining for any of the rest of us, I am afraid they would have time to go out of style before another class wedding. Think of my feelings, if not of your own, for I am just dying to wear my dress, and such a disappointment would break my heart. I take back all I said, Christie. I think the nicest thing in the world would be to marry a minister, and wouldn't have you miss it for anything."

"With such encouragement I think I shall venture to try it," answered Christie, falling in with her friend's bantering mood. "Seriously though, girls, I do feel that I never can be good enough to be a minister's wife. Think of Mrs. Bell, and then compare her with me."

"Wait till you have white hair and forty years more of experience, and then we'll compare you better," said Ella Lindsay. "Mrs. Bell is just lovely, but I should think you were too disagreeable and

priggish for anything if you were just like Mrs. Bell when you are only twenty years old. You'll do all right, Christie, if any one ever did, so don't worry, and above all don't act a bit different from your own self. Howe will be dreadfully disappointed in you if you try to act as if you were as wise and old as Methuselah. If he had wanted a wife like Mrs. Bell, he would have paid attention to Mrs. Bell's sister when she came on here for a visit last summer. I don't think she would have had him to be sure, for I am afraid she would have thought him too young and frivolous, so it is just as well that he took to you instead."

The girls all laughed. The idea of Howe choosing Mrs. Bell's sister instead of Christie was very amusing.

"It does comfort me, though I know you meant it only in fun, Ella," said Christie, when the merriment had subsided. "I don't feel quite so worried over my unfitness for a minister's wife when I remember that Howe wanted me just as I am, and so perhaps I can make him happy, even if I am not very wise or good."

"There isn't any fear but that Howe will be happy enough," said Grace Davenport. "All I am afraid of is that Christie will wear herself to a shadow trying to please every one. Christie, don't let new friends take our place with you, will you?"

"As if any one could ever be as much to me as the friends I have known and loved all my life!"

answered Christie reproachfully. "I might better ask you not to forget about me as soon as I go away."

The clock on the mantel chimed nine, and Florence Dinsmore, more thoughtful than the others, rose to go.

"It is hard to shorten our last visit to you, dear old Christie," she exclaimed with a loving hug, "but you have lots before you to-morrow, and we must let you have a chance to rest to-night. After we get the church trimmed to-morrow, we will all pile in for just one last peep at you as Christie Gilbert; but we must go now. Lucky Achsah, you are to stay all night."

The good-byes were very lingering, but the last kiss had been exchanged finally, and Christie stood alone in the moonlight, watching the girls go down the street.

Her mother joined her, and put a loving arm around her daughter, as the clear white moonlight filtered down through the thickly clothed branches of the elms and rested on the fair head of the young bride elect.

There were a few tender sentences exchanged as they stood there, and realized that at that time on the morrow they would be miles apart.

"Now it is growing late, dear, and it is time you were resting for to-morrow," said the mother presently. If it brought the tears very near her eyes to realize that her baby was soon to be out of her watchful care, she gave no sign, for she was too unselfish to

mar Christie's happiness by dwelling upon her loneliness when she should be parted from the daughter who had been so much of a comfort and companion to her ever since she was first laid in her arms, a helpless baby.

The clock chimed eleven before Christie's eyes closed in sleep. There was so much that the two friends had to say to each other on this last night, that it was hard to say the final good-night.

CHAPTER II.

THE WEDDING-DAY.

"WHAT a perfect day!" was Christie's exclamation the next morning, when the light streaming across her pillow awakened her. Truly it would have been hard to imagine a more beautiful day for a bridal. The sky was a radiant sapphire, clear and unclouded, a gentle breeze was stirring to relieve the heat which might otherwise have been oppressive, and the fragrance of the roses pervaded the dewy morning air.

It was hard to realize that the day she had been looking forward to for months had really dawned at last, the beginning of it seemed so much like other days. There were the usual toilet preparations, the quiet moments of prayer at her bedside, the chapter, and the girlish chat with Achsah that might have taken place on any other morning. The morning meal was in no wise altered, and only in the special tenderness with which the father commended his daughter to God's care and keeping could she have felt that this was her wedding day.

All that was possible to do had been done the day before, so there was no feverish haste about any of the last preparations. The bridal robes were ready, the neat traveling dress and hat were all laid out,

and there was very little that must be done before the important hour. It all seemed like a dream to Christie, as she followed her mother about, not wanting to lose one moment of these last hours with her. The girls had not so much leisure, for the greater part of the decorations at the church had been left till this morning that the roses might be as fresh as possible. The pretty little village church was as beautiful as loving hands guided by loving hearts could make it, and when the last touches had been given to the arrangement of the flowers, not even the most critical could suggest any improvement. Christie was a universal favorite, and every one was glad to do anything that they could to make this important day more bright and beautiful to her.

Maggie Riley came up from Factoryville with her arms laden with snowy water-lilies which Christie's pupils in the mission-school had gathered that they might have some share in the church decorations. They had the pleasure of feeling that they had a special part in the event of the day, for Christie, ever thoughtful of those who had not very much pleasure in their lives, had asked that they might be the ones to strew flowers in the path of the bridal procession. Daintier flower-bearers she might have had, but not any who would have more heartily enjoyed having the privilege of doing this for their beloved teacher. They had looked forward to it for weeks, and there was not one of them who had not a new white dress for "Teacher's wedding." Their

sense of delightful importance helped to comfort them somewhat for the loss of the young teacher to whom they owed so much.

A very different looking set of girls they were from the dull and stupid children over whom Christie had sighed on the occasion of her first introduction to them.

Maggie Riley had become a capable little housekeeper, and she kept the once forlorn looking home so neat and cheery in its appearance that her father no longer spent his evenings in the liquor saloons, as he had under the slatternly rule of his wife, but was glad to stay at home with his children.

Mrs. Riley preferred working in the factory where she could have plenty of companionship, to caring for her home, so when Mr. Riley, realizing how capable Maggie was becoming under the practical housekeeping instruction she was receiving at the cooking-school, suggested that she should give up her place at the factory and take care of the house instead, his suggestion was willingly adopted, and thus peace reigned in the Riley household.

Mrs. Riley declared, to be sure, that it was only her husband's partiality to Maggie that made him so contented with everything under the new rule, and she could not be induced to admit that the house was kept in any better order, or that the well-cooked appetizing meals were any more inviting than the old time rations of fried pork, swimming in its own grease, and soggy potatoes, with stale bread, with

plenty of beer to wash the whole down. Maggie had long ago learned not to expect very much from her mother, and she was too happy in her father's approval to be at all discouraged by her mother's indifference, or criticism, which latter was unsparing whenever any opportunity presented itself.

She was an unselfish little mother to the younger children, and they went to her with all their little troubles and joys, and so Mrs. Riley was just as free from any responsibility concerning them as she could have wished to be.

In many another home in Factoryville there had been great changes, and the people were beginning to learn that by neatness, economy and careful management they might have pleasant homes although their means were limited.

The young teachers of the sewing and cooking classes did not tire of their self-appointed labor of love, and they had so much encouragement in the steady progress of their pupils that they were never tempted to question whether it was worth while to spend so much of their time in the effort to help those who by their environment and heredity were so little fitted to make the best of their lives without some assistance and encouragement. Each "nexte thynge" that the girls undertook was a bit in the mosaic of their lives, and they need not fear lest they should make a mistake when they followed the pattern of the Designer.

True to their promise, the girls ran in for a last

merry chat before they went to their own homes to don their bridesmaids' array, and then Christie began to realize that this was her bridal day, and she went up-stairs to put on the floating white robes that were awaiting her. Achsah, with loving hands, helped her dress, and would not begin her own toilet till she had added the last touches to the garments of her friend.

The next hour seemed like a dream to Christie. The short drive to the pretty little church, the sea of faces, the simple marriage ceremony performed by the old minister who had known Christie all her life, the triumphant peals of the wedding march as the bridal party passed down the aisle, all these things seemed dreamlike and unreal to her.

As the husband and wife were seated in the carriage, rolling rapidly back to the house, Howe drew his wife to him in a close embrace. "My own sweet wife," he murmured, and then Christie realized that she was not dreaming, but that their lives were linked together with all their joys and sorrows "till death shall us part."

A sense of unutterable content stole over her, and she felt as if no clouds could dim a future which should be shared by her husband and brightened by the sunlight of mutual love.

When she stood with Howe beneath a bower of roses at one end of the long parlor, and received the loving congratulations of friends, she felt again as if she was in dreamland, and until the reception was

over and she had gone up-stairs to exchange her bridal attire for a traveling dress, it seemed to her that she should wake up in a moment and find herself asleep in her quiet room.

When the carriage was waiting at the door and she turned to bid her mother good-bye, then came the sudden realization that she was leaving her childhood's home for her own, and she clung closely to her mother with a feeling which would have been sorrow but for the happiness which could not be marred at that hour.

A chorus of "good-bye" followed the newly married couple as they went out to the waiting carriage, and as the driver took up the reins a shower of rice pattered against the panes, while they rolled swiftly away.

Down the long village street they passed with the sunlight filtering through the elms, and making mottled restless shadows on the pavements, while the rose-scented air seemed to breathe a sweet farewell. With the benediction of sunlight and fragrance and love Christie Gilbert Stanley was beginning her new life.

CHAPTER III.

THE WEDDING JOURNEY.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon and the Southern express was speeding on its way. Among the passengers were Christie and her husband, who were enjoying this, their first journey together, with the peculiar zest that similar circumstances always impart. They had enjoyed planning the trip together, and it seemed probable that they would be able to carry out all the delightful details of their plan. This was the third day of their absence, and so far the weather had been all that the most exacting could have required for comfort. It had been sunshiny, yet delightfully cool and breezy, so that they were traveling under the most favorable possible circumstances for enjoyment.

"I believe we are going to have a shower before long," Howe remarked, looking at a dark bank of clouds that were looming up against the blue sky.

"I wonder what we are stopping for," Christie said, as the long train came to a somewhat sudden stop in the midst of green fields apparently at some distance from any station. "There must be something wrong with the engine, or perhaps there is a crossing ahead where we have to wait for another train to pass."

The delay was unusual enough to arouse the curiosity of all the other passengers, and Howe with several of the other gentlemen left the train and went forward to see what had occasioned the sudden stoppage. He came back after a few minutes to report that part of the machinery in the engine had broken down, and that there was every prospect that there would be a delay of several hours before the damage could be remedied.

"It will just disarrange all our plans for the rest of the trip," he said ruefully as he consulted a time-table he had in his pocket; "we shall miss our connections, and as this is Saturday we shall not be able to spend our Sunday with Aunt Katherine as we had planned."

Not even a tedious delay on the railroad track in the open country could overcloud Christie's happiness, and she smiled so brightly that the shadow of annoyance forsook her husband's face as he caught the gleam.

"I have found out, though I am not very old nor very wise," she said laughingly, "that unexpected things are nicer sometimes than things that I had planned, and perhaps this may be the same way. I am sorry that we shall have to disappoint your aunt when she is expecting us, but I know we shall have a lovely time wherever we are, so don't mind about the delay on my account."

"It was only on your account that I did mind it," Howe answered, mentally contrasting Christie's cheer-

fulness with the evident and in some cases loudly expressed ill-humor of the other ladies in the train. "We really ought to be glad that the accident was not a more serious one, as it might easily have been. What shall we do to pass away the time?"

"Are you sure that it will be some time before the train goes on again?" Christie asked.

"Yes," Howe answered, "for the engineer told me that it would take at the very least calculation two hours, and he did not think we would get on our way again in double that time."

"Wouldn't you like to take a walk then?" Christie asked. "It looks so tempting over there in those pine woods, and it is not too far to walk."

Howe looked at the dark bank of clouds before he answered, but it seemed to him that the storm was passing over, and that it would be safe to venture from the protection of the cars.

"I think that it would be very pleasant," he answered.

In a few moments they had left the cars and were on their way across a wide expanse of meadow-land, which, although somewhat marshy, had been sufficiently dried up by the heat of the summer sun to make it pleasant walking.

"Isn't this delightful!" exclaimed Christie, as they entered the woods and caught the spicy fragrance of the balsams.

The cool shade was very pleasant after their walk in the sun, and the road, which was really nothing

more than a beaten track worn by the wagons that passed that way, was carpeted with pine-needles.

They found a comfortable resting-place after they had gone some little distance, upon the trunk of a felled tree, and they quite forgot how the time was passing as they sat there and enjoyed their surroundings as well as each other's company. The thick dark branches of the pines quite shut out the sky, and Howe had felt so assured that the storm was going to pass over, that he had thought no more about the menacing appearance of the sky until a loud peal of thunder startled them.

"I believe we are going to have a storm after all," he exclaimed, springing to his feet in dismay. "We are so far away from the cars that we can never get back there before the rain comes, and I haven't any idea whether there is a house in these woods or not."

Christie glanced down at her dainty grey traveling suit with the hope that it need not be exposed to a shower bath, especially as their trunk had gone on before them and she could not make any change in her dress till they overtook it.

"Listen!" she exclaimed. "I heard a man calling to some oxen, I am sure. I think he is coming this way. Perhaps he can direct us to some place where we can find shelter."

Howe listened and found that Christie was right, and from the rapid approach of the sounds it became evident that the driver was making haste to reach a shelter himself before the storm should break. In

another moment he came around a bend in the road, a short thickset negro boy, running beside his unwieldy team, and accelerating their progress with loud shouts and an occasional blow of the cudgel he carried.

"Can you tell me if there is a house anywhere in these woods where I can take this lady before the rain comes down?" asked Howe, stepping before the team.

The boy was too much amazed at the sudden and unexpected apparition of two well-dressed strangers to be able to command his senses at once, but as Howe repeated his question, he slipped back his old cap and thoughtfully scratched his head.

"Well, there ain't any very near place," he said, after a pause during which Howe and Christie waited most impatiently, yet feared to hasten his deliberate response lest they should frighten out of him the little sense he seemed to have.

"I guess you had better make out to get to Miss Judy-Pan Hudgins'. She lives nearer than anyone else, and you could stay there till the storm's over. There comes a man now that's going that way, and you can get him to give you a lift, for he knows where she lives. Everyone knows where Miss Judy lives."

The prospects of a lift were not inviting to a fastidious mind, and Howe looked somewhat doubtfully at Christie as an ancient wagon with two wheels, drawn by an equally antiquated horse, appeared in sight.

"That is a dreadful thing to ride in," he said,

"and yet I suppose that old horse can take us to shelter more quickly than we can walk. It seems to be the only thing left to do. I ought to have been more careful of you than to get you into such a scrape as this."

"Now I shall begin to blame myself if you talk that way," Christie responded. "You remember I was the one who suggested the walk. It will really be fun to have a ride in such a ridiculous old wagon, and it wont hurt us a bit."

As the wagon approached them Howe asked the driver if he would take them to "Miss Judy-Pan Hudgins'," hesitating a little over the queer name lest he might be making a mistake.

It seemed to be perfectly familiar to the man however, and he told them that they could get in the wagon and welcome.

"I am sorry that there's no place for the lady to sit down," he said, as Howe helped Christie to scramble into the back of the wagon. "Would she like to sit here?" he asked, hospitably trying to make room on the bit of plank that, put across the front of the wagon, served for a seat for himself.

"I shall be very comfortable here, thank you," Christie responded, seating herself upon the newspaper which Howe took from his pocket and spread upon the dirty floor of the wagon.

"Now, if you don't mind a little shaking up I will make Major do his best so that you won't get a wetting," the man said, as he took up his lines again.

Howe assured him that they would not mind anything if they could only escape the storm, and as another peal of thunder warned them that it was very near, the old man began to encourage his horse in stentorian tones, every now and then emphasizing his exhortations with a blow from the ends of the lines which served as a strap. The only effect of the blows however was to bring dust and hair out of the rough coat of the animal, and the greatest speed to which he could be urged was a sort of shambling trot. The occupants were sufficiently well shaken up by this trot, however, to be quite reconciled to the pace, even if it was not a very rapid one.

"This makes me think of the directions on a medicine bottle," laughed Christie, as she held her hat in place with one hand and gathered up hair pins that had been jolted out of place with the other. "'To be well shaken when taken' to Miss Judy-Pan Hudgins'. Did you ever hear such a name before in all your life, Howe? I am really looking forward to seeing her. She must be a character if she is as original as her name."

"I hope we shall soon have an opportunity of seeing her," Howe said, as the first drops of rain began to fall through the pines. "If I had only brought our umbrella so that you could have had that little protection from the rain at least. I never was so thoughtless before, and if we get safely through with this adventure you may be sure I never will be again."

"There is Miss Judy's," said the driver, pointing to a little cabin just before them. "It's lucky there's no danger of her ever being out, or you might not be able to get in after all. She'll be glad to see you, for she don't have very much in the way of company."

As the wagon stopped at the little cabin, the door was thrown open, and Miss Judy, evidently anticipating the errand of the guests, called out in a high shrill tone, "Walk right in with the lady. You've got here just in time, for the rain is beginning already."

Her guests did not delay in accepting her invitation, and Howe swung Christie from the wagon to the threshold just as the rain began to fall in good earnest.

Miss Judy invited the driver to stay till the storm was over, but he declined.

"I ain't salt, nor yet sugar; and I guess it won't hurt me," he said, and thanking Howe for the pecuniary acknowledgment of his kindness which the latter placed in his hand, he started Major off again, and Miss Judy closed the door after him and turned back to her unexpected but none the less welcome guests.

"Sit right down," she said hospitably, drawing up a little three-legged stool for Howe, and the only chair of which the room boasted for Christie. "And now do tell me where on earth you ever came from, for I know you don't belong around here."

CHAPTER IV.

MISS JUDY-PAN.

"WE were on our way down to Fortress Monroe on the express train, when it broke down here; and we thought, as there would be a delay of two or three hours at any rate, we would take a walk and look at the country," explained Christie, as the inquiry seemed to be directed to her.

"For the land's sake!" ejaculated Miss Judy-Pan. "You don't say that the express train broke down! Was it much of an accident now? Was any one hurt?"

"No, no one was hurt and the delay was the most serious part of the whole thing, and that is not sufficiently great to complain about," Christie answered. "We did not notice how the storm was coming up, and if we had not been directed to you I am afraid we might have had a drenching."

"I dare say," Miss Judy-Pan answered. "It would have been safer to have had an umbrella with you; but then young folks will be young folks, and you can't expect them to think of everything. I fancy you ain't very long married," she went on presently, with a glance at Christie's grey dress, which did look bride-like in its daintiness and delicate shade.

The rosy blush which crept up in Christie's cheeks was a sufficient answer to the question, and she went on, "Well, I hope you will have a happy life and lots of sunshine in it; and when you get to the stormy places I hope you will always have shelter, though I hope it will be a better one than this is. You're very welcome anyhow, and that is all you could be anywhere. What is your business, young man, may I ask, if it isn't asking too much?"

"I am a minister," Howe answered.

Both he and Christie were quite unprepared for the outburst of extravagant delight with which this answer was received.

"You don't mean to say that you are a minister!" Miss Judy-Pan exclaimed, her wrinkled old face becoming fairly radiant with joy. "Why, if you were welcome before, I just haven't any words to tell you how glad I am to see you now that I know that you are the blessed Lord's own dear people. I never expected that I would have the privilege of having a minister in my poor little house, and I believe he's sent you to me just because he knew that I was hungry for the sight of a minister. If you ain't too tired, sir, would you mind reading a bit of the good book, and having a word of prayer," and fairly trembling with eagerness, she took a well-worn Bible down from a little shelf and handed it to Howe. No thirsty traveler in the desert could have evinced more joy at the sight of a spring of refreshing water, than did this poor old woman at the thought of a word of

prayer with a minister of the Gospel in her own humble home.

Verily this was something very different from what they had anticipated when they left the train, and both Howe and Christie were strangely touched at the thought that their steps had been led to this little cabin, where so warm a welcome awaited those who came in the name of the Lord. The thunder was crashing among the thick pines, and the rain came down in torrents, while every now and then a vivid flash of lightning illumined the smoke-darkened rooms of the little cabin, as Howe read one of the grand old psalms that have comforted unnumbered generations of God's saints, and that fell like a refreshing shower upon Miss Judy's heart.

"The dear Lord's name be praised!" ejaculated Miss Judy, as they rose from their knees after an earnest prayer. "I never expected to hear the voice of a minister again in my lifetime; though if they could manage it, I did hope I might have one to say the last words over me when it shall please the dear Lord to take me home. To think that I never guessed what goodness he had laid up for me to-day! His ways aren't our ways, are they? I never should have thought that he would have planned it so wonderfully as to have the train stop here, almost at my very doors as you might say, and then that he would bring you right here to me. And now the storm is beginning to break away, and you will soon be able to go on your way again. It's too bad that there's

no way for you to ride over to the train, for I am afraid the young lady will get her feet wet. If I only had anything that would any way near fit her, she would be welcome with all my heart to it, but my slippers—that's all I wear on account of my feet being so bad—would go on both of her feet at once, and then you wouldn't know that there was anything in them."

"Never mind," said Christie cheerfully. "I have a pair of slippers in my traveling bag, and when we get back to the cars I will put them on, and so I will be very comfortable until my shoes get dry."

"I can't help feeling somehow as if I was to blame for it," said Miss Judy-Pan. "You see it's all on account of your having the inconvenience of getting caught in the storm that I have had this blessed hour, and so I wish I could make it easy for you somehow."

"It has been a great pleasure to us too," said Christie. "You must not think that the pleasure has been all on your side. I would have been quite willing to get my feet wet for the sake of having had this little prayer-meeting with one who appreciates it so much. Is there no church near here, or are you not able to go?"

"I'd find a way to go fast enough if only there was a church to go to," Miss Judy-Pan answered. "The trouble is that the nearest preaching is fifteen miles away, and then it is only once in two or three months that they have it, and I can't get to

hear of it half the time; and then I haven't any one to take me all that way and bring me back. All those as have ways to go have so many of their own to take that an old woman like me can't have a place very well. The last time I went I rode in an ox-cart, but I was so shook up by the time I got home again that I was fit for nothing for days. I wouldn't have minded that, for myself, but it was such a lot of care to my nephew's wife, for she's a busy woman, and she had to leave her work every now and then and come over to see how I was getting on, and I told myself I had no right to take a pleasure that cost other people so much trouble. You see there are only a few families scattered about here, and they are all poor, and so they couldn't afford preaching privileges even if any one would come for such a few. When I was young I lived down on the eastern shore where I could go to church and meeting every time the bell rang; and so it seems awful lonesome never to hear the sound of a church bell, and not to have anything to make it seem like Sunday. I suppose it will make me all the gladder when I get to heaven where I can join with all the saints in praising God night and day, but 'my soul longeth, yea even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord,'" repeated Miss Judy reverently.

Both Howe and Christie enjoyed talking to this dear old saint upon whom they had so unexpectedly stumbled, and the time passed pleasantly and profitably until a gleam of sunshine and the hush that

succeeded the soughing of the wind, told them that the storm was over.

Howe looked at his watch and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"I had no idea that the time was passing so quickly," he said. "We have just half an hour to get back to the train, if it should leave at the end of two hours, though I hardly expect that it will. This has been a very pleasant break in the monotony of the long delay and one that we shall never forget, Miss ———"

He hesitated. It seemed so absurd to call her Miss Judy-Pan, and he had a great desire to know what her name really was, for it surely must be that some local slovenliness of pronunciation had twisted her name into "Judy-Pan."

"I should like to know the name of one who has been such a kind hostess," he said.

"Judy Paran Hudgeons is my name," said Miss Judy, who had a more distinct way of speaking than most of her neighbors. "You see there are so many Hudgeons of us around here, that we would get all mixed up if we didn't all give the full name when we were calling each other, and so right often we drop the Hudgeons and go just by our first two names. I am most generally called Aunt Judy-Pan by those that know me, and I've lived here so many years now that I feel as if I was aunt to the whole lot of them, whether I am or not. Well, I am sorry you must go, and I wish I could tell you

how thankful I am to you, and to the good Lord for sending you."

After they had said good-bye, and started on their way under the dripping pines, the old woman hobbled to the door and watched them as long as she could see them, and then she went back to her chair feeling as if she had entertained angels unawares.

CHAPTER V.

DISAPPOINTMENT.

"ISN'T she the dearest old saint?" exclaimed Christie enthusiastically, as she walked over the slippery wet pine-needles, needing the support of her husband's firm arm every now and then to keep her from losing her balance. "I feel quite repaid for these little wet spots on my dress, when I think of the pleasure you gave her and how she enjoyed that prayer. I never dreamed of anyone being as really hungry for the means of grace as she is. I don't suppose anything else could have given her the pleasure that this unexpected opportunity for prayer did."

"I never was more touched by anything than by her eagerness to have me pray with her," remarked Howe. "I think this has been one of the little unexpected bits, Christie dear, that has been better than our own plans could have been. It will be one incident of our wedding journey that I do not think we will ever forget."

This unexpected happening, if we can call anything a happening which is part of God's plan for our lives, had not yet come to a conclusion. As they reached the edge of the pine woods, and came out

into the meadow again, to their consternation they saw the engine puffing as if the engineer was getting up steam; and although Howe wildly waved and beckoned, and even essayed to shout, though he was conscious that the distance was too great to afford the least chance of being heard by the engineer, the train rolled away, leaving Howe and Christie in a most unenviable predicament.

Saturday afternoon at four o'clock, with all their belongings except Howe's pocket-book, which he fortunately had in his pocket, miles away from any village where they might have hoped to find at least a tolerably comfortable shelter over Sunday, and near no station where they might have hoped to take a later train. To add to the complication, the sunshine suddenly vanished, and even a less weather-wise man than Howe could have foreseen that the storm which had just broken had only been the harbinger of a severer and more lasting one.

"What shall we do?" cried Christie, decidedly dismayed at the prospect.

"The first thing will be to get back to shelter again at Miss Judy's, before the rain comes on again, and then perhaps she can advise us what to do. It may be that there is some comfortable house where we can find accommodations over Sunday," Howe answered, mentally condemning himself for having lingered sufficiently long to allow even a chance of being left by the train.

"It is not two hours yet since we left the train,

and if it had waited as long as the engineer said it would surely have to, we could have had ample time to return to it before it started," he went on presently, in an annoyed tone, looking at his watch again. "I feel as if I had been so abominably careless, Christie dear, to have got you into such a predicament, and yet after the storm came up I hardly know what else we could have done. We started almost the moment the rain stopped, and even if we had known that we would miss the train by waiting we could not have ventured out in the rain without any protection, for you would have been completely drenched, and besides the discomfort you would have surely taken cold. I am afraid you will anyway, for I know your feet must be wet."

"Now please don't feel as if it was anything that you could have helped," Christie said, forgetting her own annoyance in the desire to make her husband feel more at ease. "As I said before, if I had not proposed the walk we would have been in the cars, and so it is all my fault, if fault there is any. Of course we shall not have quite as pleasant a Sunday as we had planned to spend with your aunt, but I have no doubt we shall enjoy it very much. As the old driver said about himself, I am neither sugar nor salt, and so even if we get wet, a little rain water won't hurt me, though I am not so sure about the fate of my dress. It's quite an adventure, and we shall have lots of fun thinking about it afterward, I know, though perhaps our enjoyment will be more retro-

spective than present. Won't Miss Judy-Pan, as I shall always want to call her, be surprised to see us back again."

They walked rapidly toward the pine woods again, and as they could hardly expect that they would be favored with another lift on the way, they hastened their steps as much as possible lest they should be caught in the rain.

Miss Judy was as astonished as Christie had expected her to be, when she came to the door in response to Howe's knock and recognized the guests from whom she had so lately parted.

"Well, land of mercy!" she exclaimed. "You don't surely mean to say that you have missed the train after all, or perhaps it ain't going any farther to-night."

"We missed it, Miss Judy," explained Howe, as they entered the little cabin again. "We reached the edge of the woods just in time to see it start off, and so we had to see it go away without us. We came back here to ask your advice. What had we better do? Is there any house where we could be accommodated over Sunday near here? If you can tell me of one, I will go and see what arrangements I can make after the storm is over; or if it promises to be an all-night pour, as I am somewhat afraid it will be, I will go very soon."

"You had better sit down and rest a spell and let me think," said Miss Judy reflectively. "I declare I don't know what to say. There are such a mighty

few houses near here, and they ain't the most of them much better than mine, except perhaps a little bigger. There's my nephew, but he hasn't any spare room, and they have so many children that you would be drove clean distracted by Monday. There's Lem Nathan Hudgeons, but it's a long walk from here, and they often go down to their married daughter's to spend Sunday, so it's mighty uncertain whether you could catch them home or not. That would be your best chance, anyhow, but you had better wait a spell and see if the storm isn't going to maybe blow over."

The storm showed no such intention, however, and before the next half hour had passed away it came down in gusts which drove against the window panes in white sheets, and seemed as if it was determined to force an entrance. When the first fury of the rain subsided it still came down relentlessly, and there was no room for doubt that it had settled in for a storm.

Howe was still more dismayed at the prospect of getting Christie to a comfortable place, when, upon making inquiry of Miss Judy, he found that he would not be able to get any covered vehicle.

"If I hadn't such a poor place, and nothing fit to put before you to eat, I would be so proud if you would stay with me all night," said Miss Judy eagerly. "I would do the very best I could for you, and though it's a poor enough place, I don't know but you would be quite as comfortable here as you

could be any where. You could have my room up-stairs all to yourselves, and I could make out nicely here in my chair all night. I often do sleep down here anyway, when my feet are bad and I am afraid to climb up-stairs all alone. Seems to me it would be better than getting as wet as you would have to to go anywhere else, and you don't know how proud I would be to have you. Except that I feel badly about not being able to do better for you, there isn't anything in the world that could make me as happy as to think that I had entertained a minister and his wife."

There was no mistaking the cordiality of the invitation, and small and destitute of comforts as the little cabin seemed, it was beautifully clean, and they would probably be just as comfortable there as they could be anywhere else. Besides, as Miss Judy had said, they would be sure to get wet if they had to expose themselves to the inclemency of the weather.

Howe hesitated but a moment before he responded to Miss Judy's invitation, and reading Christie's assent at a glance, he said,

"You are kindness itself, Miss Judy, and we should be very glad to accept your invitation if you are sure that we will not give you too much trouble. It is too bad to take your bed, though, and you must sleep in it yourself, and let us make ourselves as comfortable as we can down here."

But Miss Judy protested so earnestly against this arrangement, that Howe and Christie saw that her

hospitable feelings would be hurt if she were not allowed to carry out her plans for their comfort.

When Miss Judy had carried her point, she began with delighted alacrity to make preparations for her guests' supper.

"You must take your wet shoes off, the first thing," she said to Christie, who was trying to dry her wet shoes by holding her feet toward the smouldering embers of the open fire. "I'll give you a pair of my clean stockings to slip on while your own things are drying, and there wont be any danger of your taking cold then."

Christie was about to protest that she could dry her feet just as well without taking off her shoes when Howe seconded Miss Judy's suggestion. He was very anxious lest Christie should take cold, and really suffer from the effects of this adventure, for which he felt responsible in spite of Christie's attempt to take the blame upon her own shoulders. Christie's small feet were quite lost in the length and breadth of the blue woolen stockings, and her eyes sparkled with amusement as she doubled the toes over and secured them with a pin so that they should not trip her up when she tried to walk about. She looked about the small room with no little curiosity as to how Miss Judy contrived to live with any degree of comfort when she had so few of the conveniences of modern life.

Everything was as primitive as possible. The open fireplace was simply a small brick chimney built into

the wall of the house, and the fire was kindled upon the ground, without any andiron to hold the sticks. A strip of iron with a hook at one end was fastened to one side of the chimney, and upon this an old kettle swung. A frying-pan with a long handle constituted the remainder of Miss Judy's cooking utensils. The three-legged stool upon which Howe uncomfortably balanced himself, a padded chair awkwardly constructed from a barrel, and a foot-stool, together with a small table was all that the room could boast of in the way of furniture; and a very small shed that opened from the side of the room opposite the fireplace held Miss Judy's wood pile and a broad shelf upon which she kept her eatables. The walls of the little cabin were just the smooth sides of the split logs of which the little cabin had been built, and they had been tinted with the smoke of years to mellow shades of brown which would have charmed an artist's eye.

"Isn't this fun!" Christie said softly, as Miss Judy bustled into the little shed.

The anxious expression on Howe's face relaxed into a smile as he caught the gleam in Christie's eyes.

"I shall think so if you do, dearest," he said, in relieved tones. "I could enjoy anything with you, but I was feeling very badly about having you exposed to hardship the very first thing after leaving your home."

Christie was honestly enjoying her unusual expe-

rience, and this peep into a life so entirely different from her own.

"I wish you would let me help you, Miss Judy," she said, as she noticed how lame her hostess was and how hard it seemed for her to move about.

Miss Judy looked positively horrified at the suggestion.

"Why, I wouldn't think of such a thing for the world," she said in shocked tones. "Indeed it's only a pleasure to do for you, and if I had more to do with I would be as happy as a queen; but there, one can't do more than one's best, and you know that I am doing that with all my heart, don't you? I'm awful afraid you wont be able to make out to eat any supper. If I had known you was coming I would have got something better somehow, if I possibly could."

"Don't worry about us, Miss Judy," Christie answered cheerfully. "What you have will do very nicely for us, and I know we shall enjoy it very much indeed."

Christie rather doubted this a little later as she saw of what the evening meal was to consist. It had never entered into any of her experiences of the poverty she had met in her mission work, that the food was not eatable, if only there was enough of it. She seriously began to wonder whether, hungry although they were after their early lunch, they would be able to eat anything.

Miss Judy put some sticks on the fire, and it was

soon blazing up cheerfully, while the kettle began to give an anticipatory hum.

"I wish I could make a cup of tea for you," said Miss Judy, as she emerged from the depths of her little shed. "My nephew gave me a drawing of tea for a Christmas present, for he knows I'm powerful fond of it, and if I had ever dreamed I was going to have a minister here to stop with me you may be sure I would have kept it; but one night I was terribly laid up with my rheumatiz, and I thought it would be so comforting that I just made myself a pot of tea, and so it's all gone. I'm that sorry I don't know what to do, to think I might have had it now if I hadn't used it up."

"Indeed we don't either of us care particularly for tea," said Christie. "I am glad you had it when you needed it so much, and we would both of us rather have had you use it than keep it for us."

"I hope you don't mind the flavor of chickory," went on Miss Judy, as she put some ground substance into a tin pail, and poured the water from the now boiling kettle over it. "I don't care for it much myself, but some of the folks around here like it better than tea. I hope you will be able to make out to drink it," she went on somewhat anxiously.

"Now, Miss Judy, you must not worry about us," protested Christie. "We shall be very comfortable, and you must not give yourself a bit of anxiety on our account."

CHAPTER VI.

SUPPER.

"Do you eat fish?" Miss Judy asked.

"Yes, we are very fond of fish," Howe replied, for the inquiry had been directed to him.

"I'm glad of that," Miss Judy replied, as she took two small fish out of a little barrel of brine, and washing them in water to remove some of the salt, proceeded to put them in the long-handled frying-pan and cook them.

"What kind of fish are those?" asked Christie a little curiously, for they were not familiar to her.

"These are bug fish," Miss Judy answered. "Leastways that's what the folks around here call them, though I believe they have different names in other places. They use them mainly here to fertilize the ground with, but some of us eat them and like them pretty well."

"That is an odd name," said Christie, not feeling particularly drawn toward her prospective supper by its name and by hearing that it was not usually used as an article of food. "Is there any reason for giving the fish that name?"

"I guess it's only a foolish story, but they do say that when the fish dies it opens its mouth, and a little

bug runs out, and so they call it a bug fish; but I guess that isn't really so. They catch lots of them out in the river, and my nephew brings me home a lot when he goes down that way, and I put them down in salt so I will be sure of having something to eat on hand all the time. They ain't as good as herring or mackerel, but then folks can't always be choosers."

When the fish were cooked, Miss Judy slipped them on a tin plate and stood them down beside the fire to keep warm.

"Would you rather have your sweet potatoes cold or hot?" she asked.

Christie looked a little puzzled.

"You see I haven't any oven, and the sweets around here are too wet to boil; so my nephew's wife, she has a stove, and she bakes up half a barrel at once for me, and sometimes I eat them cold and sometimes I warm them up. I think they are a little the best cold though. These ain't been cooked more than a week, so they taste pretty good yet. Now that it's getting hot weather they don't keep as well as they do in winter."

Christie could scarcely restrain her surprise at hearing of potatoes being cooked for future use by the half barrel.

"I think we would like them cold, then, if you think they are nicer that way, wouldn't we, Howe?" she asked.

"Certainly," Howe answered politely, though he

had begun to share Christie's fear that not even politeness would enable them to eat much of this unusual supper. If they had only brought the little lunch basket with its dainty contents that was speeding down to Fortress Monroe in their unoccupied seats!

Miss Judy spread a newspaper upon the table in place of a table cloth and putting two tin cups beside the tin plates which she had placed there for the accommodation of her guests, she laid a two-pronged fork at each place.

From the shed she brought a flat hoe-cake made of yellow corn-meal mixed with salt and water and baked in the ashes, and some of the cold baked potatoes.

A great pity filled Christie's heart as she watched the old woman so hospitably setting forth of her best. Was it possible that this was her usual food, food that she would hardly have expected a hungry dog to relish! Christie thought that she had seen something of poverty and privation in her visits among the factory people, but she mentally confessed that they lived like princes compared to poor Miss Judy.

Two battered spoons completed the table appointments, and then after inquiring whether they liked sugar in coffee, Miss Judy put some from a small box, that was evidently kept for choice occasions, in the cups, and poured the hot liquid over it.

"Now, sit up, and make as good a meal as you can," she said hospitably, evidently feeling some

pride in her supper, which was set forth with a degree of elegance that was not usual.

She would not eat with them, though Christie and Howe both urged her to, and she would not sit down, as by doing so she would rob one of her guests of a seat.

"I shall be all right here," she said, seating herself on the floor beside the fire, and then turning her back to them with some instinct that perhaps they would eat more freely if she were not looking at them, Miss Judy began to revolve delightful plans of having, oh, wonderful treat! a preaching service on the morrow.

If only it would happen that her nephew would come over as he almost always did on a Sunday morning, she could tell him that a minister was staying with them, and he could go round and let every one know, so that in the afternoon they could all come and have an out-door service among the pines.

The healthy appetites of her guests had been whetted by their walk in the open air, and by the long time that had elapsed since their lunch, but hungry though they were they found it almost impossible to choke down a mouthful. By eating two or three mouthfuls each of the fish, and strewing it round their plates, they made it seem as if they had partaken of it, and then they tried a potato. Not even politeness and the desire to please their hostess could make them force down more than one mouthful of the cold soggy mass. The hoe-cake

was hard and dry, and seemed to defy them to eat it, and Howe could not do more than taste the liquid called by courtesy coffee.

Christie was so determined that Miss Judy should not think that they could not eat the meal she had so gladly bidden them to, that she made herself eat quite a little piece of the hoe-cake, but Howe secreted his piece in his pocket, determined to dispose of it in some other way than by eating it.

With a wry face Christie gulped down her chickory, while Howe quietly poured part of his back into the tin pail.

"Isn't there anything more you will have?" Miss Judy asked, as her guests arose from the table.

"No, thank you," Christie answered. "Now you must take my chair, Miss Judy, and let me see you enjoy your supper."

The rain was falling less heavily now, and as the room was becoming rather too warm with the heat of the fire, Miss Judy suggested that they should open the door, as there was no danger that the rain would come in, for the wind was in the opposite direction.

Christie and Howe stood side by side in the little doorway, enjoying the cool air even if it was damp, and looking out into the dark shadows of the pines.

Perhaps the fact that they were both heartily hungry had something to do with the feeling of depression and homesickness that made them rather

quiet for a few minutes, and a longing for the creature comforts of civilization which neither of them liked to admit, made the rain and the soughing of the wind among the trees have a dreary sound.

"Well, we are together, aren't we, dear?" Howe asked, as he put his arm about his wife and drew her closely to his side; and as Christie nestled up to him, she forgot everything but the thought that as her husband said, they were together, and so a little hardship could be smiled at instead of lamented.

"Isn't it rather lonely here for you, Miss Judy?" asked Howe presently. "Have you any near neighbors."

"No, I'm all alone by myself," Miss Judy answered cheerfully. "The nearest neighbor I've got is about a quarter of a mile away. It used to seem powerful lonely at first, but then you can get used to anything and I never think anything about it now."

"It doesn't seem right for you to be all by yourself, though," said Christie. "Haven't you any one who could stay with you?"

Miss Judy shook her head.

"No, there ain't any one who would want to come out here to such a lonely place and stay. I used to live with my nephew till five years ago, but his family got so big that there didn't seem to be any room; and then my rheumatiz got bad, and I was of no use and only in the way, and we all agreed that it would be best for me to have this little place by myself. My nephew owned it, and no one else

wanted it, for it's too small for any one that has any family. We had no hard feelings about my coming away. I didn't like to sit around and see so much to be done when I couldn't do any of it, and then I s'pose I am beginning to get old, and the noise of the children made my head bad, and I used to wish I could get quiet sometimes and have a little chance to think. My nephew's very good to me. He brings me all I have, and he sees to it that there is always something in the house to eat, and whatever I have it's the same as they have themselves at home. I worry sometimes over what will become of me when I get sick and need care, and then I remember that the Lord always has taken care of me, and the more need I have of his care the more sure I will be of having it."

The odor of burning leather attracted Christie's attention, and she turned toward the fireplace with an exclamation of dismay.

Her shoes had been put beside the fire to dry, and while every one had forgotten their near proximity to the burning sticks, a bit of blazing wood had fallen from its place, and rolled over until it lay against the sole of one of Christie's shoes.

CHAPTER VII.

MISSIONARY MITTENS.

It had not taken but a few moments for the burning coal to make a hole through the thin sole of Christie's kid shoe, and when she picked it up, she was dismayed to find that the sole was badly burned and curled forward in such a way that it looked as if it would be impossible ever to get her foot into it again.

Christie's sense of the ridiculous overcame her dismay, and at the thought of being obliged to wear Miss Judy's blue stocking till she overtook her trunk at Fortress Monroe, she burst into a merry peal of laughter which was contagious. Howe and Miss Judy both joined in it, though a moment before neither of them had regarded it at all as a laughing matter. Howe could not imagine what Christie would do without a shoe, as it was not at all probable in the benighted region in which they had found themselves that they could get another for her; and Miss Judy was so mortified at the thought of having permitted an accident to happen to anything belonging to her guest, that she had been on the verge of tears until she heard Christie's laugh.

"But how will you ever get it on again?" Miss Judy said at last.

Christie looked at the shoe for a few minutes before she answered. At first sight it did seem to be a hopeless enough looking affair.

"I think I can fix it so I can wear it, at least until we get to our trunk," she said after a little pause.

"I think you can bend the sole straight for me, Howe, and then if you will cut off the part that is burned and twisted out of shape, I will put a piece of pasteboard in for a sole, or several folds of paper; and as it is not cold weather, I can get along very respectably until we get to Fortress Monroe."

"That will be quite an ingenious way to fix it," Howe replied. "I was afraid it was quite out of the question to do anything at all with it."

Miss Judy went back to her supper, which she ate with evident appetite and relish, and Christie mentally resolved that when she went home she would see that some luxuries, among them a packet of tea, should find their way to this comfortless abode.

When she had finished her meal and washed up the dishes, which latter operation did not require much time, Miss Judy announced that she would go up-stairs and see that the bed was comfortable for her guests. Christie directed her eyes toward the square hole in the ceiling, with inward queryings how Miss Judy ever got up there. Did she fly?

"I suppose you are wondering how I go up-stairs, now ain't you?" said Miss Judy good naturedly. "I used to keep the steps out all the time, but I found they took up so much room that I keep them in the

shed now, and only take them out when I want to use them."

She retreated into the shed, and presently reappeared bringing a sort of compromise between a ladder and a set of steps. Howe rose at once to relieve her of their weight, in spite of her protestations, and placed them beneath the hole in the ceiling.

Slowly and with the greatest of care lest she should lose her balance, Miss Judy's unwieldy form disappeared through the opening above, and Howe and Christie, could hear her moving slowly about as she made preparations for their comfort for the night.

"I should think she would break her neck going up and down those steps, as rheumatic as she is," said Christie softly.

"I don't see how she ever gets down again without falling," said Howe.

They were soon to see, for in a few minutes Miss Judy began to come in sight again. First her large carpet slippers came in view and she sat down at the top of the opening and placed her feet firmly on the steps before she risked the farther descent.

By dint of long practice she achieved the descent very successfully and skilfully, and reached the floor safely in spite of Howe's fears. Howe insisted that he could be very comfortable upon the footstool, and made Miss Judy take her chair, which she was very loath to do while her guest occupied such a lowly position. Finding that he was in earnest, she yielded at last, and getting her knitting-work down from the

shelf where she kept it beside her Bible, she began to knit. Her poor old hands were so stiffened with rheumatism and hard work that she could scarcely grasp the needles, and every stitch cost laborious effort. She was knitting a pair of mittens, though Christie fancied that they must be intended for some giant they were so unwieldy in their proportions. They were quite the ugliest things that Christie had ever seen in the mitten line, knit in a little plaid of brown and dingy grey checks, with a thumb that seemed altogether disproportionate in size to the rest of the mitten, and which stood out and away from the rest of the work as if it disdained it altogether.

The evening dragged wearily, and at a very early hour Christie and Howe were fain to bid their hostess good-night and express a wish to retire.

As they knelt together in evening prayer before going up-stairs, Christie was impressed as she had never been before with the unifying power of the Christian religion. Here was this poor old woman with whom they had not another interest in common, who had opened her home and placed all that she had, poor though it was, at their disposal, because they were followers of the Master she loved and served, and they could gather around the family altar feeling drawn together as if they had been friends, because of their common love for the Saviour.

"I am glad I happen to have a bit of candle for you to go to bed by," Miss Judy said, as she lighted

a very diminutive bit of a tallow dip, from the fire, and placed it in Christie's hand before she ascended. "I don't often have a light myself, for the day is plenty long enough for all I have to do, and I am ready to go to bed by the time it gets dark."

Christie was glad too, for she was not sufficiently accustomed to going to bed in the dark to care to undertake it in strange surroundings unless it was necessary. She had a curiosity to view the upper chamber and see if it accorded with the lower part of the house.

"I hope you will find everything comfortable," Miss Judy said, as Christie, with some misgivings as to her skill in climbing, began to ascend the steps, with Howe close behind her, ready to catch her if she should lose her balance.

The room up-stairs was even smaller than the one below, and quite as sparsely furnished. There was a bedstead with a gay patchwork quilt upon it, and an inverted barrel which evidently was supposed to serve the purpose of a table.

"Look at the mural decorations," whispered Christie softly.

The walls were festooned with bunches of herbs which had been hung there after having been dried, and they swayed gently to and fro as the air came in at the open window and stirred them.

Howe did not answer. He had seated himself upon the side of the bed, and had assumed a most woe-begone aspect.

"Why, Howe, what is the matter?" asked Christie.

"Oh, I am so hungry!" groaned Howe, lowering his voice so that his hostess should not suspect his feelings. "Christie, I am absolutely starving. I believe I could eat you. And if I am so hungry what must you be, for you ate less lunch than I did."

"I am so hungry, too!" confessed Christie. "Oh, Howe, I think it is the most ridiculous thing in the world that we should go to bed hungry when we are on our wedding trip."

"It's more sorrowful than ridiculous," Howe answered. "Seriously, Christie, can you stand it until morning, or shall I go out and try to get something to eat?"

"Oh, I shall manage to survive it," Christie replied. "I don't believe you could find anything to eat if you did go out, Howe, for we are miles away from any stores; and as for going to some other house to try to buy something to eat, in the first place I don't believe it would be much better, and then I would rather almost starve than have Miss Judy ever hear that we were not satisfied with her supper after she did the best she could for us. Perhaps to-morrow we shall be so hungry that we shall be able to eat bug fish and cold potatoes, or perhaps she may have something better for breakfast. I feel as if I had never half appreciated the comforts of my life before, when I think of that poor old woman living upon such food."

"I wonder if that can be our breakfast that is un-

der way already," said Howe, as a smell of burning woolen arose.

"Something else is sharing the fate of my shoe," Christie said laughingly. "I don't think it is our breakfast, though, Howe. You needn't worry about that."

An exclamation of distress, followed by low sobs from the room below, attracted Christie's attention, and she went to the opening in the floor and looked down to see what Miss Judy's trouble was.

The poor old woman was holding the mitten upon which she had been at work, in her hands, sobbing over a hole which had been burned in it, and which was yet smouldering, giving out the disagreeable odor common to burning wool.

"It's her ugly old mitten that got burned this time," Christie explained to Howe. "I am going down to see if I can't comfort her a little, she is crying so hard over it."

"Just look," said Miss Judy, holding up the mitten for Christie to see as she carefully climbed down the steps and went over to the fireplace beside which the old woman was sitting. "It's burned so I won't be able to do anything with it. Oh, what shall I do?"

Christie was surprised at her distress, which seemed so disproportionate to the worth of the mitten, for poor as Miss Judy was, surely she would not grieve so sorely over a little burnt yarn.

"I am sorry it is so badly burned," she said com-

fortingly. "Were you knitting it for some special purpose?"

"Yes, it's my missionary mitten," Miss Judy answered. "There, I dare say you are thinking that I am a very foolish old woman, and I am, I know; but I wouldn't have had anything happen to that mitten for all I've got."

Christie wondered why Miss Judy called it her missionary mitten. Was it possible that it was going out in a missionary box to some poor missionary? Christie thought that missionary life might have greater trials than she thought of if wearing such hideously ugly mittens was a possible part of it.

"You said it was a missionary mitten," she said. "Did you mean that you were going to send it to a missionary?"

"Oh, I forgot that you didn't know," said Miss Judy. "You see this is the way of it with the mittens I make. About five years ago there was a lady stopped near here for a few days on her way out west where she was going to be a missionary. I heard her talk about all the awful wickedness of the place she was going to, and how much they needed schools and churches and money for the work the missionaries wanted to do, and it just made my heart ache to think that with all the dear Lord had done for me, I had never done one single thing to send the gospel to anyone else. I was dreadful bothered about it for a while, for I never have a cent of money and I had no way of saving anything to give away,

but I prayed that somehow I might be able to do something. If I had known more and been young and strong, I would have been glad to go myself with this lady and do what little I could toward telling those poor creatures that the Lord died for them, but I wouldn't be any use and only in the way. One day the man over here at the store asked me if I would knit a pair of mittens for him, and he said if I would he would give me enough yarn to make another pair for myself, and then he would try to sell them for me. I was awful glad of the chance, but my fingers are so crippled up that though I worked nearly all my time it took me six months to get one pair done. It took six months more to get the next pair done, but I had good success and they sold right off. The men like my mittens because they are so strong and knit so close that they say they never wear out. I had fifty cents then for missions, and as I hadn't the address of the lady that told me about it, I just send it to the address that is printed on the little book she gave me, and it always gets there all right. I am glad when the receipt comes back to me, for then I know my fifty cents has gone to work. I know it is only a little and maybe not worth the sending, but then I remember the boy with his loaves and fishes, and I think the Lord don't need great things to do his work with. He can bless little things and use them just as well."

Christie listened with a positive reverence for the

poor old woman who so unconsciously told this story of self-denial and generosity.

"Do you mean that it takes you the whole year to earn fifty cents?" she asked. "Do you work six months just to get the yarn to make the pair you sell?"

"Yes, and this is my own pair that I am working on now, you see, and so now I don't know what I will do; for I can't get any more yarn until I knit another pair, and that will make me six months late with finishing my own and sending the money. It will be harder to sell them then, too. Well, there's no use worrying over it. The good Lord knows I meant to give him all I could, and he'll know I couldn't help this. I don't see how I came to be so careless, just after letting your shoe burn, too. I suppose I was nodding and so it slipped down off my lap."

"I want you to let me buy that burned mitten from you just as it is," said Christie.

"No, indeed, I couldn't let you think of doing it," protested Miss Judy. "'Tisn't good for anything, and I couldn't let you get it just to help me. That wouldn't be right, though you are awful good to think of it."

"But it isn't just to help you out that I want to get it," Christie said. "Indeed, Miss Judy, I am sure that it will do more work for missions just as it is, all burned and spoiled, than it would have done if you had finished it and got the money you ex-

pected to for it. We have a missionary society in the church I have always been connected with, and sometimes there are only two or three gifts in the whole year that cost any self-denial, and a good many of us don't always take the trouble to go to the meetings even. I want to send them this mitten and tell them the story of it to read at their next meeting, and I think when they hear how you work all the year to earn fifty cents, and then instead of spending it on any comfort for yourself give it all to missions, that a great many will feel how little they give and will be ready to deny themselves more."

It seemed such a little thing to Miss Judy that she should toil all the year with her poor cramped fingers that she might earn the privilege of contributing to the missionary cause which had so deeply stirred her heart, she could not understand how it would reproach those who had given only of their abundance and never denied themselves in the least. It was some time before Christie could make her promise to let her buy the burnt mitten. It was only by representing to her that perhaps this was the Lord's way of using her work that she consented at last.

Christie carried the old mitten up-stairs with her when she went back to her husband, and as she put it down before him her eyes were full of tears.

"Howe," she said softly, "I don't think I have ever realized the least bit of what self-denial can be.

To think of this poor old woman who hasn't even a cup of tea to cheer herself with, denying herself the few comforts she might have, that she can send fifty cents a year to the missionary society! It is an honor to know her and to stay under her roof."

"Even if it is leaky," said Howe with a smile, as the rain found a place of entrance, and dropped upon his neck so unexpectedly that it made him start. "She certainly is a remarkable woman, Christie, and after I have a good meal so that I shall not be so hungry, I shall be glad that we were thrown in her way. Our light is getting near its end, dear, so you must hurry if you don't want to come to bed in the dark."

Christie made all the haste she could, but the bit of candle had burned down to its socket, and after flickering feebly went out entirely before she was ready for bed.

It did not take her long to go to sleep, for she was tired, and more than that, very hungry, though she had been reluctant to admit it.

"I do like good old Miss Judy, but I should be very glad if we could have a good breakfast and share it with her," Christie mused, as she listened to the soft patter of the rain upon the roof. But in a little while she had forgotten her hunger and weariness in a soft refreshing sleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OPEN AIR SERVICE.

VERY early the next morning, almost as soon as the first rays of the June sun began to flush the eastern sky, Miss Judy was awake and was watching at her door for some chance messenger whom she might send upon an errand. It was more than an hour before her watch was rewarded with the sight of anything more than the squirrels which now and then came near her, and frisked fearlessly about upon the pine-needles or ran up the trees to disappear in the branches.

At last she heard a whistle that seemed to be coming nearer all the time, and presently a small colored boy in his gay Sunday shirt of red flannel that made him look like a bright poppy, emerged from the trees. A wide straw hat was tipped back on his head, and his pants, which were evidently the property of some one of larger growth, were drawn up by suspenders until they reached nearly to his shoulders. "Hush your noise, and come here a minnit, Si," said Miss Judy, as he came near enough to be within speaking distance.

"Si, I want you to do a favor for me," she went on, "and I will make it up to you in some way. I have got a minister and his wife staying here."

Silas thrust his tongue into his cheek and looked at her with a waggish expression of unbelief.

"That's likely, now ain't it, Aunt Judy! Where did you get them? I always thought that you was too good to tell what wasn't so."

"You're a bad boy to talk that way, Si," said Miss Judy reprovingly. "Of course it is true or I wouldn't say so. They were on the express train yesterday that broke down out here, and they got off to take a walk and got left. They couldn't get anywhere else on account of the rain being so bad, and so I just did the best I could for them. It's awful poor, though, and not what they have been accustomed to, so I want you to go over to my nephew's and tell him about it for me. Tell him if he could bring me over something for them for breakfast I should be dreadful glad; and tell him too that I guess the minister will preach for us, if we can only get word around to the people that there is a chance of a preaching service. Now you run right along, so's he won't be too late coming over. Don't you forget what I've told you."

"No, I'll remember first rate," said the boy. "All I ever forget is to go fishing and to come in to dinner."

Miss Judy knew Si well, and she was not afraid in spite of his nonsense that her message would be forgotten. She was sure that her nephew would bring her over something for breakfast for her unexpected guests, and she was glad that she would have

something better to offer them than the plain fare of the night before.

Si's message was promptly delivered, and it threw the Hudgeons family into a state of pleasant excitement. They felt as if it was due for the credit of the family that the minister and his wife staying under Aunt Judy's roof should be made comfortable, and preparations were at once made to get a good breakfast for them. Their ordinary fare was not so very much better than that of Miss Judy, but they could muster up the materials for an appetizing meal upon extraordinary occasions, and this they accounted one.

"Maria, I reckon I can find one of them broilers that is big enough to kill," said Seth. "You could stir up a little light bread and I will take some milk over, and so they'll make out finely."

The whole family were soon astir, bent on hospitable purposes, and by the time Christie and Howe had awakened, nephew Seth stopped before the door of the little cabin with a well-filled basket upon his arm.

"So you've got company, Aunt Judy," he said, as the old woman came out to meet him, glad to see that he had not come empty-handed. "This is all I could fetch, being as there wasn't much time; but I reckon they will make out well enough with it. I'll go around and let all the folks know that there will be preaching service, if the minister will preach, and we'll have a good meeting."

"Sit down a spell till he gets up, and then we will see what he says, though I don't make any doubt but that he will be willing," said Miss Judy.

Up-stairs Howe and Christie were trying to perform their toilets as well as they could, without many of the appurtenances which they had heretofore considered as actual necessities. A small pocket-comb which Howe fortunately happened to have with him had to answer for both Howe and Christie.

"I won't know how badly my hair looks," said Christie, when she had arranged it as well as she could without any brush. "There are some advantages in not having a mirror, if one can only think of them."

The arrangements for washing were of course, as might have been expected, of the most primitive kind. At the back of the house where the water that ran down the sloping mossy roof dripped into a rude gutter, was a rain water barrel, and a tin basin hanging beside it was alike dipper and wash bowl. A clean but very coarse towel, looking as if it was not accustomed to every day use, had been produced in honor of the guests.

The water was delightfully cool, and though innumerable tiny pollywogs disputed its possession with Christie, she rather enjoyed the novelty of the whole performance.

"If I was not so dreadfully hungry," she said to herself, for she did not know of the contents of the covered basket in the corner of the shed, and she

wondered how she could satisfy her hunger upon cold potatoes and hoe cake.

When Howe came down to take his turn at the basin, he found Miss Judy's nephew waiting to speak to him. Clean shirt sleeves were full dress toilet with Seth, so he saw no reason to wait until Howe had finished his usual morning toilet, to make his acquaintance. Howe consented willingly to preach as soon as the subject was broached, and Seth went off at once to scatter the news so that there would be a good attendance.

"Where would be the best place for the meeting?" asked Aunt Judy.

"Under the big trees by our place," answered Seth. "I will come over with the cart or send one of the boys for you, and I don't believe the minister and his wife will mind the walk, for it ain't so far if one isn't lame."

"That will be a good place," said Aunt Judy. "Now mind you tell every one, Seth, for there ain't many chances that we get of having preaching."

It was a perfect morning after the storm of the night before. The sun was shining brightly, there was a pleasant breeze, and a soft hush seemed to pervade all nature and make one conscious of the Sabbath calm even here in the solitude of this pine forest.

Miss Judy somewhat proudly spread forth her breakfast. Whatever might have been lacking in her meal of the night before would surely be made

up for now. Her guests were quite as appreciative as she could have wished them to be, and they ate a morning meal with as vigorous appetites as she could have desired them to have; they were too hungry to be very fastidious, and enjoyed all the unexpected good things with the sauce that hunger gives. It was a treat to Miss Judy too, and she found the chicken and light bread much more appetizing than her daily fare of fish and hoe-cake.

"If it won't tire you too much," she said deprecatingly, "will you have a word of prayer this morning? I know you are going to preach this afternoon, but if you knew what a treat it is to me to have a chance for a prayer you wouldn't mind my asking you."

The wrinkled old face, brown and smoke dried, was a study of peace and serenity as Miss Judy listened to the reading of the words which she well nigh knew by heart, but which seemed so doubly precious to her when uttered by a minister and under her own roof.

She lingered on her knees after the last word of the prayer had been uttered, apparently loath to leave the divine presence. "I am so glad it's a good day, for then every body can get to meeting," she said, as she went to the door and looked up into the blue sky, apparently anxious to convince herself that there was no probability of a storm arising to interfere with the service upon which she had set her heart.

Christie wanted to help her about the morning work, but she refused to let her do anything.

"That dress is too pretty even to sit down in my house with, and you needn't think I am going to let you do anything in it that might soil it," she said. "Anyway, there isn't anything much to do, and I can easily manage it."

When she had finished the few tasks that were to be performed, she went out to see what her guests were doing, and found that they were walking about under the trees, enjoying the spicy odor of the balsams, which seemed all the more fragrant after the rain. Satisfied that they were enjoying each other's society more than they could if there was an addition to their number, she went back to the house, and sat down in the doorway to rest after her exertions.

Christie found her here a little later when she came back to sit and chat with her hostess while Howe took a little time to meditate upon what he should say that afternoon, as he had not come prepared with any discourse.

"I suppose you don't dip," said Miss Judy after a while in a somewhat deprecating way.

Christie looked bewildered.

"I don't think that I understand just what you mean," she said at last, after vainly trying to guess what Miss Judy meant, so that she need not be obliged to ask her.

Miss Judy produced a little tin box, and what

seemed to be a small stick with one end made into a sort of a brush.

"I reckon that you never even heard of dipping before," she said, smiling.

"No, I don't believe I did," Christie replied.

"Well, I don't suppose it's a very nice thing to do, but it's a great fashion around these parts. It's taking snuff this way," and Miss Judy wet the brush end of the stick in her mouth, and twirling it deftly around in the contents of the box, raised it to her lips, laden with what adhered to it, and put it in her mouth.

When Christie was a little girl, she had once seen an old woman who was fond of indulging in a pipe after dinner, but this seemed a more shocking thing yet to do, and for a few moments she felt her liking for Miss Judy suffering a serious decline. She reproached herself for this feeling, however, a few moments later. Why should she expect this ignorant old woman to be any more refined in her habits or cultivated in her tastes than any of her associates? "The grace of God can dwell with some people that you and I couldn't." The quotation which she had heard or read somewhere came back to her mind with new meaning. There was no doubt but that the grace of God dwelt in this heart, even though there might be much that was uncouth about the person.

After Christie had recovered from her first disgust at seeing Miss Judy dip, she quite enjoyed her chat

with the old woman. Her life had been so quiet and uneventful, and so different from anything that Christie had ever known, that it was like turning the pages of an old book to listen to her talk. The hours passed pleasantly until dinner time, and after that meal was concluded it was time to start for the place where the meeting was to be held. Seth had not forgotten his promise to send for his aunt, and one of his boys made his appearance with the ox-cart, with a heap of straw in the bottom upon which Miss Judy could sit, while the horns of the old ox were garlanded in honor of the day.

It was a delightful walk along the pine-carpeted road, and Christie and her husband enjoyed every step of it. They were together, and of course they were the most congenial of companions, and they were both interested in these new surroundings upon which they had so unexpectedly stumbled.

"Wouldn't we have been surprised if we had known all that was going to happen to us when we got off the train yesterday?" said Christie meditatively. "It seems as if it must have been a week ago at the very least, instead of less than twenty-four hours."

"I don't believe we should have left our seats if we had known the sequel," said Howe. "Still I don't regret it, particularly after our good breakfast, for it has been a different experience from any that we would have been apt to encounter, and we shall enjoy it in retrospect as well as now."

A few steps farther brought them to the clearing, where a large space had been made by felling the trees and cutting away the underbrush, and only two large trees with outstretched branches were left, as patriarchs of the forest.

It was beneath these trees that service was to be held, and while one of the women took Christie to a seat which had been reserved for her, as a favored guest, in a carriage which had brought some of the audience from a distance, Howe was escorted to the little table, which holding a Bible and hymn book was placed beneath the tree. An old colored uncle with a fiddle that looked as if it might have seen use at the festivities of cornhusking and like country amusements, sat near the table ready to lead the singing with his instrument.

It was a picturesque scene, and one which Christie was sure she would never forget. The faces of the people were all more or less tired and care-worn. Even the young people looked as if they had found life a hard struggle, as indeed they had, and they were prematurely bent and furrowed, almost before the bloom of youth had hardly had its day.

It was evident that they all felt the occasion one of privilege, and Howe, remembering how seldom they had the opportunity of listening to the Word of Life, prayed very earnestly that the message might be chosen for him to deliver to this congregation which he had not sought but which had been chosen for him.

He gave out a familiar hymn, and the old uncle played it over from memory, every now and then intermingling with the air weird little minor melodies which made a strange and not unpleasing variation. The singing was hearty if not melodious. Every one joined in with all his might, and those who did not know the words hummed away in a conscientious effort to do their part.

It was no eloquent sermon nor elaborately arranged discourse which the young minister uttered. It was just a simple message to these simple folk of the love of their heavenly Father. "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you," was the text; and a feeling of restfulness stole into many a weary heavily-burdened heart as they heard the assurance that they were not forgotten by the love which suffered not even a bird to fall to the ground unheeded, nor by the Saviour who so wonderfully revealed the Father's love. After the sermon, if the pleasant informal talk can be called by so pretentious a name, more singing followed, and then with the benediction the service closed.

Howe went from one to another, escorted by Seth, who felt the importance of being the one who had arranged this service, and shook hands with his congregation, feeling greatly touched at the gratitude which was warmly though shyly expressed. After a little while the old fiddler struck up another familiar tune, and he was soon surrounded by almost all those who were present at the meeting, all glad to

enjoy a little more singing before they separated and went to their homes.

When at last the congregation had somewhat reluctantly dispersed, Miss Judy was helped into her equipage, and the ox began to slowly lumber down the road again, while Christie and Howe walked slowly along behind.

"Do you know, in spite of all these inconveniences and these spots on my traveling dress that I am pretty sure will not come out, I am glad we were left by the train," said Christie. "It was worth any amount of hardship and discomfort to have brought the comfort and help that you did to these people to-day. I enjoyed watching their faces while you were speaking. They did seem to drink in every word so earnestly. I don't believe you will ever have a more attentive congregation, Howe, or a more appreciative one, although you could easily find a more intelligent one anywhere. This afternoon has been perfectly delightful."

"I have enjoyed it too," said her husband thoughtfully, and I hope that the message that I brought them will give them comfort and help."

"I am sure of that," Christie answered. "You ought to have seen, as I did, the care-worn look brighten into a restful expression upon some of those tired faces."

CHAPTER IX.

FULFILLED PLANS.

THE next morning Seth came with an old buggy which was the best vehicle that could be borrowed in that neighborhood, and took Howe and Christie to a station at which they could take a train that would carry them to a place where they could connect with the main road from which they had strayed. Miss Judy would not hear of their remunerating her in any way for her hospitality, and she carried her refusal to the point of tears.

"It's more of an honor than I thought was ever coming to me, to think that I could have a minister under my roof; and it would take all the pleasure out of it if I thought you wasn't willing to let me do such a little thing as that for you."

When they found that it would really hurt her feelings to insist, they contented themselves with thanking her most heartily, while they privately planned to send her some comforts that would make her lonely life brighter.

"I shall never forget Miss Judy," said Christie, when the long drive was over, and they were seated at last in the car. "I have the burned old mitten to remember her by, and do you know I think that

old mitten will preach more effective missionary sermons upon self-denial and giving that costs, than any of the most able speakers in the land could. I shall never be able to give without being sure that there is some self-denial in my gift when I remember what her gift cost—a whole year of work. Besides the mitten to remember this trip by, I shall have my poor shoe with its uncomfortable ugly sole, all burned up by Miss Judy's fire, and these spots on my dress for which, though she is not responsible, yet the weather in her part of the country is. I feel as if I would enjoy making a toilet with the assistance of a brush and comb and mirror again. Do I really look fit to travel as I am now?"

Howe smiled as he looked at her laughing face.

"Yes, I do not think that any of the passengers will object so strenuously to your appearance as to ask to have you put off the train. Still I agree with you that it will be refreshing to reach a place where we can have the conveniences to which we have been accustomed."

Howe had telegraphed to his aunt that they had been detained, but would be with her that evening, and when the train rolled into the station she was there to meet them.

"Where have you been and what has happened to you?" she asked, after she had warmly welcomed Christie, whom she had never seen before. "I could not imagine what had happened to you, when the train came in two hours behindhand and you were

not on it. At last the conductor said that a lady and gentleman had left the train when it broke down and he was sure that they must have been left, as after the train went on again he noticed that their seats were empty. I had a peep at the traveling bag and wraps which he had put in the office for safe keeping, and I was so sure that they were yours that I resolved not to worry any more, but just concluded that you had missed the train and would make your appearance to-day. When I received your telegram I was satisfied that I had done the wisest possible thing under the circumstances."

"As you always do, Aunt Katherine," Howe added, with a smile.

"Tell me all about it; or is it too long a story to tell till tea time?" Aunt Katherine said, as the carriage bore them swiftly away from the station toward her home.

"It's rather too long a tale to begin just now," Howe answered. "Show her your foot, Christie dear, and let her see that it is no common adventure which has detained us."

"Why, what happened to you?" exclaimed Aunt Katherine, as Christie held out her ragged shoe for inspection. "You look as if you had been through fire and water."

"My shoe certainly did," laughed Christie, "through the one and the other."

"Now you must restrain your curiosity till we get home, Aunt Katherine," said Howe. "It's too inter-

esting a tale to spoil in the telling, and you must be patient."

It was not until they were gathered around the tea table, with its dainty appointments and appetizing dishes, that Howe began an account of the adventure which had delayed them.

"This is very different from the last meal we sat down to, isn't it, Christie?" he said, as he stood and admired the tasteful combination of delicate china, embroidery, and damask napery, which made the meal a pleasure to more senses than that of taste.

"You poor children!" exclaimed Aunt Katherine, as Howe dwelt upon his hunger. "I never knew you were a man given to appetite before, Howe, but you say so much about your deprivations in the line of eating that I shall not be afraid of your not doing ample justice to my supper. How about Christie? Wasn't she hungry, too?"

"Yes, I know she was in the same condition, but then she suffered silently, which made it seem less serious," Howe answered. "I will tell you when her grief broke out, Aunt Katherine; when she found that she would have to make her toilet without a mirror, then I think her suffering exceeded any that hunger could have inflicted upon her."

"Don't believe him," Christie said laughingly. "I was priding myself upon my superiority to ordinary feminine vanity, for I have managed to exist very comfortably ever since Saturday morning without a glance at a mirror until I reached your house this

evening. I must confess that I was very glad, when I did see myself, that I had not been able to look in a glass before, for as I was separated from my traveling bag and could not have improved my appearance in any way, I should not have been unconscious enough of my generally slovenly appearance to have been at all comfortable."

"I think you looked wonderfully well considering those aggravating circumstances," said Aunt Katherine. "I know Howe of old, my dear, and if you are not already pretty well acquainted with him you will find that he is a great tease."

"I have learned that already," Christie responded merrily.

All through the evening Christie kept mentally contrasting this beautiful home with the comfortless cabin in which dwelt a King's daughter just as surely as in this tasteful abode, and she wondered what Miss Judy would say to all these luxuries of which she had never even dreamed if she could be transplanted here. When she nestled upon the downy pillows that night, she smiled as she thought of the steps she had had to ascend the previous evening to reach her hard bed, and she concluded that though she had not known it before, she was very fond of luxury and comfort.

The next morning dawned scorching and sultry. There was not a breath of air in motion and the leaves of the trees hung down limp and motionless. It was one of those June days that seem to have

been misplaced in the calendar, and which rival August in sultry discomfort. The very thought of breakfast was a burden, and Christie and Howe were both glad that they had not planned to spend the day in the cars, for it seemed as if the coolest nook of Aunt Katherine's cool house would be scarcely endurable.

"Oh, it is so hot that I can't bear to think of eating," sighed Christie, as the breakfast bell rang its silvery summons.

"When we go to housekeeping we won't have any breakfast in hot weather. We will go and live with Aunt Judy," laughed Howe.

The evening before a large bowl of glowing Jacqueminot roses had decorated the centre of the dining table, and Christie had admired them so greatly that she could scarcely eat. This morning she thought of them again as she descended the stairs, and she fancied that if anything, they would add to the heat of the atmosphere, with their brilliant blaze of color. She almost exclaimed aloud in her pleasure, as her eyes fell upon a slender glass vase in the centre of the table, with one pure white geranium blossom with its green leaves, making an atmosphere of coolness about it. Through the transparent glass she could see the slender stems reaching down into the water, and there was a daintiness about the choice of the flower, its arrangement, and the charming contrast between the green of the leaves and the silvery white of the blossom, that made breakfast a

possible and desirable thing, and in imagination, at least, relieved the atmosphere of the breakfast-room of the sultriness that seemed overpowering every where else.

"Oh, Aunt Katherine, what a charming little picture that flower makes!" Christie exclaimed, after she had greeted her hostess. "I never realized, much as I love flowers, what a difference they could make in a whole room, and in a mood too," she added. "I was so hot that I felt cross, and just looking at that lovely flower has made me feel cool, and comparatively speaking comfortable."

"It is one of my theories, and Howe has doubtless told you that I have a great many," said Aunt Katherine smiling, "that a flower on the breakfast table makes a difference in the whole day. I began my married life with the resolution always to have flowers on the breakfast table, and I do not remember that I have once failed to do so. It is easy to arrange for it even in winter, with a little forethought; and my husband used to say that the little blossom that he half unconsciously noticed in its place every morning, used to make a fragrant atmosphere for the whole day, and made many a day brighter with its silent influence."

"I mean to make that resolution too," said Christie eagerly. "I love flowers so dearly that it will be a perfect delight to me to plan to always be supplied with some for this purpose; and although I

never thought about it before, I can see how it could make a difference in all the day."

"I am so glad to hear you make that resolution, Christie dear," said Aunt Katherine approvingly. "I don't think that the smallest thing that helps to make home a brighter or happier place can be left undone without loss."

"I do want to be a good home-maker," said Christie wistfully. "I wonder whether I shall succeed as you and my mother have done, Aunt Katherine? It rather frightens me to think of undertaking it when I know so little."

"I am not a bit afraid but that you will succeed," said Aunt Katherine, smiling down into the upturned girlish face. "Ah, here comes Howe at last. Howe, if I was your wife I should undertake to break up your tardy habits the very first thing. You would be quite frightened if you knew how I have been preparing Christie for your various delinquencies. She will see the necessity of being as severe with you as I have always had to be."

Howe laughed. He knew well that he was a great favorite with his aunt.

"I have no doubt but that you have been instructing Christie how necessary it is to take good care of me, and not let me want for anything that she can give me in the way of comfort. Honestly, now, Aunt Katherine, haven't you been telling her that it would only be a wifely thing and really a duty to bring my breakfast up to me in bed every morning?

Mother always said that I was spoiled for six months after I had visited Aunt Katherine, Christie, so you can imagine what a stern disciplinarian she is."

It was a delightful day that the husband and wife spent with Aunt Katherine, and Christie was sorry when evening came and they took the train which was to carry them on to Fortress Monroe for a brief visit before they should go to their new home.

CHAPTER X.

PREPARATIONS.

"THERE!"

It was in a conclusive satisfied tone that Mrs. Bateman uttered this exclamation, as she sat down to rest for a moment after a day of busy preparation. She quite forgot her weariness as she looked about the room and saw the result of her labors, and she wondered whether the guests for whom they had been prepared would be equally pleased.

You might have guessed that she had been preparing for the reception of a bride, if you had had an opportunity to peep into the dainty blue-tinted chamber. The walls were a pearl tint, with a wide frieze of blue, the ceiling was a pale blue flecked with silver, and the draperies over the window and mantel were of the same color. The bed and toilet appointments were of the snowiest white, and all the various ornaments about the room betokened that the taste and skill of the mistress of the house had chosen their place and arranged them. A vase of satiny La France buds stood on the little table by the window, as if Mrs. Bateman had guessed at Christie's favorite flower. Through the open door you could catch a glimpse into a room no less invit-

ing. This was to be the sitting-room and study for the minister and his wife. Well filled book-cases lined one side of the wall, and Howe had taken time to arrange the volumes in his brief visit before his wedding. His desk stood in the middle of the room, and light could be thrown upon it from a tall piano lamp that stood beside it. Near enough to suggest cosiness and companionship was a low rocker, and as Mrs. Bateman put it there she smiled at the picture that rose in her mind's eye. She had despoiled the rest of the house to make this room as inviting and homelike as possible, for she wanted Christie's first impressions of her new home to be as delightful as any exertions on her part could make them.

"Just like Mrs. Bateman!" every one had said, when they heard that she had invited the new minister and his bride to make their home with her till they could get settled in a new home of their own.

"Nothing could be more delightful for them," was the next remark, as the contrast between being inmates of Mrs. Bateman's tasteful home and boarding in an exceedingly unpretentious boarding-house, which was all that the village could boast in the way of accommodations, rose before the mind.

Of course there was the hotel, but neither Howe nor Christie was willing to begin their married life in such a public way, if any other arrangement could possibly be made.

Dr. Bateman was one of the elders in the church, and when Howe was discussing his plans with him,

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trying to decide upon the best present arrangements for Christie's comfort, he had said,

"The pleasantest way would be for you to board in some family until you can get to housekeeping for yourselves. The only difficulty would lie in finding a pleasant family who would be willing to take boarders."

Just then the same hospitable thought had risen in the mind of both husband and wife, and reading an assent to his unspoken thought in his wife's eyes Dr. Bateman had said,

"I wonder if we could not make you comfortable for a while? What do you think about it, wife?"

"We could try, and I should be very glad to have our friends here with us till they can find a nest in which to begin their own home."

Howe's face grew bright. He could not have asked anything better than to bring Christie into this delightful home where she would be with friends who would be thoroughly congenial and helpful. Mrs. Bateman had counted the cost in the brief moment in which she had revolved the plan in her own mind before her husband had uttered the invitation, and she had decided that she would gladly undertake the extra work and open her home to these young people. She had the interests of the church and her pastor at heart, and she could not help feeling that it would be well for him, in the first few months of his pastoral and married life, if he could be shielded from the gossip that would natur-

ally be circulated about him if he had to live in the comparative publicity of a hotel or boarding-house, and her heart had already gone out to Christie since Howe had shown her with pardonable pride the sweet girlish face.

It would be very hard for this young girl to come from the shelter of her own home and her mother's loving care, and find herself a target for the gossip and criticism which would be inevitable; and though much of the curiosity might be prompted by kindly interest, yet Mrs. Bateman felt that if Christie was her daughter she would be very glad to have her shielded till she had time to get somewhat adjusted to her new relations, both with her husband and his charge.

Warrensville was not any more addicted to gossip than any other small town, nor were the people in the church especially uncharitable in their remarks; but in the years in which Mrs. Bateman had lived in the place she had seen a minister's wife come to Warrensville, and she remembered what lively interest was manifested in everything that the young couple said and did, and how little things that in themselves were of no importance were circulated around and retailed from one to another, till it seemed as if the prevailing subject of conversation everywhere was the minister and his wife. She could and would shield Christie from this, and though no doubt those who wished to talk about them could find plenty to stimulate their conversational powers, yet

their private life should not be made public property.

Mrs. Bateman never did anything by halves, and so she had thrown her whole heart into the preparations for Christie's coming. If she had been looking forward to the home-coming of a daughter of her own she could not have done more to make these rooms inviting. All was ready now, and she still had a couple of hours before the arrival of the expected guests in which to supervise the preparations for supper and make her toilette. Yet there was one more preparation that Mrs. Bateman had to make, and it was one that spoke more eloquently of her thoughtful love for her pastor and his wife than any of the beautiful appointments she had gathered together for their happiness. Kneeling beside the low rocking-chair, Mrs. Bateman prayed very earnestly and lovingly for the two who were to begin in these rooms their married life. If Christie's mother could have known of that prayer she would have felt that her daughter would have at least one true friend in her new home.

In the quiet city of the dead a little white stone marked the sleep of the tiny baby daughter who had lived just long enough to bear a name, and nestle for a few days in the mother's arms which were so soon to be empty ; and for the sake of that little one as well as of Him who loved and blessed little children, Mrs. Bateman loved all girls, and was never more happy than when they brought their joys and

sorrows to her, as she fancied her own daughter would have done.

Lois would have been twenty years old now, if she had lived, just Christie's age, and perhaps it was because of that thought that Mrs. Bateman's heart went out toward her with peculiar motherliness. Her thoughts had been with the young bride all day, and she knew how bright everything must seem to her just now, as she stood upon the threshold of her new life. It was too soon for her to realize that there could be anything but sunshine awaiting her, and she longed to shelter her from every unnecessary pin prick of annoyance. Looking back upon the beginning of her own married life, she recalled the roseate hue which tinted the future in those first days ; and with the perspective of twenty one years, she could see that the adjustment of two lives to run smoothly and without friction had not been easily accomplished, nor the lessons of mutual forbearance easily learned, and she wished that she could help Christie by lending her pages from her own experience when the first shadows should darken the sky that was so radiant now.

"I am glad that I shall have her under my wing for a little while at all events," she said to herself, as she cast one more satisfied look around the room before she left it, to seek the kitchen where the supper preparations were well under way.

We will not follow Howe and Christie through the two weeks that have passed since we left them at

the beginning of their wedding journey They have been days of unalloyed happiness, when they have been all-sufficient for each other, and when it mattered but little where their steps led them so that they were side by side.

It was not strange that Christie shrank a little from going to her new home, to meet for the first time those who were to be her new friends; and when the last day of their pleasant wanderings came she would have been glad if they could have gone back to Weston where so many tried and true friends would have welcomed them. She would not whisper to Howe a word of her reluctance to meet strangers, for he seemed to look forward eagerly to their settling down to quiet home life, and to beginning the duties of his new charge with his wife by his side. Christie was unusually silent during the last hour of their journey. She was inclined to self-distrust, and now that she was so near her new home she began to wonder whether she would be the help to Howe that she longed to be, and whether she might not disappoint some of his people who might expect so much more of their minister's wife than she could ever hope to be or to do.

She was glad that Howe attributed her silent mood to fatigue, and when he had arranged her shawl so that she could lean her head against it, and put a satchel beneath her feet, he left her to herself to rest, while he indulged in bright day-dreams of the future, which had never seemed as bright to him as

it did just now with Christie beside him. To confess the truth Christie was almost homesick when the train slackened its speed as it rolled into the station, and the conductor called out "Warrensville!"

The little confusion of gathering together all their traveling paraphernalia and leaving the train, diverted her thoughts from herself, and the cordial handshake of Dr. Bateman, who had come to the train to meet them, and his pleasant words of greeting, somewhat dispelled her despondent mood. A few minutes' drive, and the carriage stopped before a large house, the outlines of which Christie could but faintly trace in the gathering dusk, and she had reached her new home.

The door was thrown open, letting out a flood of light, and as Christie went up the steps Mrs Bateman came forward to meet her. She did not wait for a formal introduction, but put her motherly arms around the girlish figure so lovingly that all Christie's fears and forebodings vanished at once, and she felt as if she was coming into a home where a warm welcome was awaiting her.

A few minutes later the travelers were ushered upstairs to their rooms to remove the dust of their journey before the evening meal, and Christie exclaimed in sincere admiration as she looked around the beautiful rooms that spoke so eloquently of Mrs. Bateman's cordial hospitality.

"Welcome home, my wife!" exclaimed Howe, as soon as they were alone together, holding her closely

to him with the glad realization that she had come to stay, and share his life ; and there was no trace of longing for other home or friends in the radiant face that was upturned toward his.

Before supper was ended Christie had quite decided that she should love Mrs. Bateman, and before bedtime she knew that she already had won her heart. There was a motherliness about her that made Christie feel almost as if she was with her own mother, and she could not be grateful enough that she was to be an inmate of this pleasant home, instead of being among those who might be uncongenial and critical.

"You were so good to be willing to take us in ! " she said when she bade her hostess good-night ; for Mrs. Bateman, considerate of the fatigue of the journey and the excitement of meeting strangers, proposed retiring at an early hour. "I hope we shall not be a very great care to you."

"I am sure that it will be a very great pleasure to me instead of any care, my dear child," Mrs. Bateman returned so cordially that Christie could not doubt her sincerity. "I feel as if we should be great friends, and I hope we shall have a great many pleasant hours together."

"I love her already, mother dear," Christie wrote to her mother that night, for she could not go to bed, tired though she was, till she had written a few words to tell her mother of her pleasant home-coming, and the kind friends who had welcomed them so

cordially. "I feel sure that she will be just the wise friend that I need to keep me from making mistakes, and will help me to be all that I want to be to Howe. I am going to be very happy in my new home with my precious husband and these good friends."

Christie's last waking thoughts were of the pleasant impressions that her new home had made, and they mingled with her dreams.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BEGINNING.

THE bright June sunshine crept in through the partly closed shutters and fell aslant Christie's pillow, waking her at an early hour the next morning. She was glad to have a little time to think while she was waiting for the rising-bell that Mrs. Bateman had told her would ring in time to give them ample leisure for preparation for breakfast. Everything before her seemed as bright as the sunlight that danced on the wall. She felt as if surely no one had ever been as blessed before in husband and home and friends, and a silent prayer went up from the depths of her heart that she might not be so absorbed by the gifts as to forget the Giver. She must guard her heart lest this human love which was so sweet and satisfying should absorb all her thoughts, and make her forgetful of the love which was so infinitely more tender and true than the tenderest and truest human love, and which had sent her all this great happiness.

She arose presently, and after making her toilet, and donning with a girlish pleasure the dainty blue tea-gown that was so becoming, she sat down with her Bible and had time for her morning reading and prayer before the rising-bell rang.

"What, up and dressed already?" exclaimed Howe in surprise, as he unclosed a pair of very sleepy brown eyes, to see a pretty vision in blue standing beside him. "What sin did you have on your conscience that you could not sleep any longer? or was your vanity so great that you were impatient to don that becoming gown?"

Christie laughed.

"It was too lovely to sleep," she answered. "Oh, Howe, I see such beautiful roses down in the garden. Do you suppose I might go down there and look at them while you are getting dressed? I know where the door is, so I shall not trouble any one."

"Why, of course you can," Howe responded, drawing her face down to his for a morning kiss. "Mrs. Bateman will be glad to have you make yourself at home, and perhaps you will have a little chat with her before breakfast. She is one of the loveliest people in the church, Christie, and I am so glad you can be here with her, for then you won't be so lonely when I have to be out or busy. I'll be down too, directly, unless I should fall asleep again, which isn't likely."

Christie easily found her way out into the large garden, and making her way to a bush laden with the beautiful La France roses which had been in her room to bid her welcome, she bent over them so absorbed in admiration that she did not hear Mrs. Bateman's steps approaching until her voice roused her.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Stanley. I see you are as fond of flowers as I am. I am glad that we are beginning to find out mutual tastes already."

Christie blushed a little as she returned the salutation. She was not so used to her new name yet that she could hear it without an added tinge of color.

"Yes, I love roses dearly," she answered. "I am very fond of all flowers, but roses are my special favorites. These are such beautiful ones."

"That bush is my pride," replied Mrs. Bateman. "Here is one which blooms very luxuriantly, too; and though its roses are not nearly as perfect, nor as large, yet I feel as if it made up for that by the profusion and sweetness of its blossoms."

They passed from bush to bush, and Mrs. Bateman found that Christie was quite as enthusiastic a lover of flowers as she herself was, and when the breakfast bell rang they were both surprised that the time had passed so quickly.

As soon as the pleasant morning meal was concluded, and they had united together in family worship, the doctor went into his office, which was a small building adjoining the house though detached from it, Mrs. Bateman excused herself to attend to her household cares, which like those of most housekeepers were multiplied on Saturday mornings, Howe seated himself at his desk to look over the morrow's sermon, which he had prudently written before he was married, and Christie was left to the pleasant

task of unpacking and arranging her belongings, and trying to realize that she was not here for a visit but that it was her home.

The day passed very quickly, and the hours were so filled with employment that they did not hang heavily upon Christie's hands.

She dreaded the next day when she should make her first appearance at church and meet the people, so the time that intervened passed all too quickly. She could hardly realize that she had known Mrs. Bateman such a little time, for she clung to her as if she had been an old friend, and was relieved when Mrs. Bateman suggested that she should sit in her pew for a few Sundays at least, instead of sitting in solitary state in the minister's pew.

Sunday dawned fair and beautiful, and when the sweet toned bell rang out its summons Christie felt a childish desire to hide herself, instead of obeying its call. After she had reached the church however, she soon forgot her uncomfortable consciousness of self, and enjoyed the service thoroughly.

It filled her with a quiet joy to listen to her husband's voice, and it seemed as if his tones invested the familiar words of the opening hymn with a new meaning. It was not the first time Christie had heard him preach, for he had often filled the pulpit in Weston; but it was the first time she had listened to him as her husband, and as her heart swelled within her, she thought that there could surely be no nobler, grander vocation in the world than to preach

the gospel, and she felt as if she had been called to a great honor when she had been asked to share such a life.

All who had ever listened to Mr. Stanley had conceded that he had unusual talent, and there was nothing immature nor young in either his thoughts or his delivery; Christie enjoyed every word that he uttered, and felt a wifely pride in the attention with which the congregation listened to his sermon. It was an inspiration to the young man to glance now and then into the sweet earnest face and the uplifted eyes of his wife, and he determined that with such a helpmeet he would consecrate anew every power of mind and body to the work to which he had dedicated his life.

In her interest in the service Christie had forgotten the ordeal which awaited her afterward, but she was so cordially welcomed that she did not shrink from meeting the people as she had thought she would, and they no longer seemed strangers to her, but became her husband's people who would love her for his sake, and whom she would love for the same reason.

Her first impressions of the church people could hardly have been more favorable, and she would have been pleased if she could have known that with very few exceptions they were all equally prepossessed with their minister's bride. Of course there were some who made it a point never to be satisfied with what the majority liked, and these

habitual grumblers wondered what the church would come to with two such young people at the head of it. What could be expected of a minister with no experience, especially when his wife was a mere school-girl? They had quite forgotten that they had opposed the last minister because he was elderly, and they had continually deplored his lack of life and progressive ideas. These malcontents were in the minority, however, and everyone was too well used to their grumbling to pay any heed to it.

As a rule the young pastor and his wife met with a hearty welcome, and even those who had grown somewhat indifferent to the interests of the church in the two years in which they had been without a settled pastor, resolved to put their shoulders to the wheel, and aid in every possible way in any project that should be undertaken. There was a certain glow of enthusiasm that was contagious about the young man who was just throwing himself into his life work with all his energies, and it seemed as if a new page in the history of the church had been turned over.

It was a promising field for labor, for there was both room and material for growth, and the mutual satisfaction of pastor and people gave promise of harmony and united effort. It was a pleasure to the people to listen to their own pastor after the many Sundays they had listened either critically or indifferently to supplies and candidates; and although the habit of criticism was too confirmed to be thrown

aside at once, yet as they listened to the earnest words they caught the spirit of the speaker, and received the message without stopping to criticise the bearer.

"I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

That was the text Howe Stanley had chosen for his first sermon as the pastor of the church, and surely no more fitting words could have been chosen as the beginning of a pastorate, especially the pastorate of one who was beginning his ministry. That the young minister uttered every word from the very depths of his heart, none could doubt, and his high resolve struck a responsive chord in many a heart.

"Jesus Christ, and him crucified." That was to be the keynote of the new life in the church, and surely no better watchword could have been chosen.

CHAPTER XII.

MAKING ACQUAINTANCES.

CHRISTIE'S first trying experience was to come the following afternoon, and as it happened she was left entirely alone to meet it. Mr. Stanley had been called out to see a sick man, Mrs. Bateman was busily engaged in the kitchen and knew nothing of the caller who was entertaining Christie in the parlor, or she would have left her preserving in its most critical stage and gone in to the rescue.

Christie was sitting on the front porch, which was far enough back from the street to be somewhat retired, writing the joint letter which she had promised to send to her girl friends from her new home, when she heard the gate slam and glancing up saw that she was about to have company. She tried to remember whether the face was one which she should recall as having been one of the people she met on Sunday, but her memory was treacherous. She had met so many strangers that she knew there were but a few faces she could remember, and she was not sure that she could connect the names with even those few faces. Perhaps it was someone to see Mrs. Bateman or the doctor, and not anyone that she was expected to know.

"So you don't remember me?" was the inquiry,

as there was no look of recognition in Christie's face when she arose to greet the new comer.

Christie flushed with embarrassment.

"I—I am afraid I don't," she stammered.

"You must try to cultivate your memory or you will have all the people down on you. It don't do for a minister's wife to be so forgetful. I was introduced to you Sunday morning, one of the very first ones, and here you can't remember that you have ever seen me before. My name is Mrs. Bush."

Christie was quite sure that she should never forget again, and she tried to apologize to her very frank visitor for her remissness upon this occasion.

"Oh, it don't matter as long as it's me," said Mrs. Bush, ushering herself into the parlor, and picking up a fan, which she proceeded to ply vigorously. "If it was some of the people, now, you would find yourself in hot water. My sakes, how touchy some of the church people are, to be sure! But I needn't tell you, for you will find it out soon enough. Well, I am sure I am glad that we've got a married minister, for then we won't have one that will be flirting around with all the girls. I never saw a girl yet that wasn't ready to jump at a minister, and I suppose you were just the same way. I can tell you it isn't quite such a fine thing as you think for, when you have got all the people to please."

"I can readily believe that," Christie responded, half afraid of her peculiar visitor, and wholly annoyed at her bluntness.

"I hope you will tell your husband not to make his prayers so long," went on Mrs. Bush, not in the least abashed by Christie's attempt at dignity. "I think most ministers get the idea somehow that they are expected to fill up the time by praying for everything under the face of the sun. I think it's a good thing for a minister's wife to know how people feel about such things and then she can give her husband a hint and save him from making mistakes. I only tell you this for his good," she went on, observing at last that Christie's face was flushed with indignation. "There is no use in being touchy over it. How do you think you are going to like Warrensville?"

Ten minutes ago if Christie had been asked the same question, she would have responded, "Very much indeed," but her opinion of her new home had materially changed after Mrs. Bush's remarks, and she had begun to feel as if she could never live in a place where anyone was at liberty to come and make such disagreeable remarks to her merely because she was the minister's wife.

She tried to keep her temper, and not show her annoyance, as she answered,

"I have scarcely been here long enough to answer that question. I expect to like it, of course."

"Well, you may as well, seeing you have got to stay here for a while whether you like it or not. Are you a good church worker?"

"I am generally interested in anything that is

being done in the church and willing to help as much as I can," Christie responded, wishing that this catechism might be terminated in some way, as it was becoming altogether too personal to be agreeable.

"Ministers' wives ought to be good church workers, for if they don't take hold and work with a will I don't know how you can expect much from other people. Mr. Brown, that was our last minister, you know, had a very useful sort of a wife. She was handy and could make herself useful in any way that she was wanted to. She was a good leader too, and could make a first rate prayer, better than her husband, some folks thought. She was the president of our sewing society, and she was very good at cutting out the work and all that sort of thing. She didn't mind finishing up the odds and ends that no one else liked to bother with, either. Some folks didn't like her, but I often say we can't expect to get Mrs. Brown's place filled in a day. There's some folks as are never satisfied with anything, and now and then you would hear some one saying that she neglected her home by doing so much outside; but land's sakes, you've got to be criticised if you're a minister's wife, and it might as well be for one thing as another, as I used to tell Mrs. Brown, when I'd tell her the complaints I'd hear and she'd feel kind of discouraged over them. She was awful easy discouraged, poor thing."

"I don't wonder," was Christie's thought, but she

checked its utterance, as her visitor went on, after a brief pause for breath.

"If you don't mind, I would like to have a look at that basque you wore Sunday. I am going to cut one out for my daughter this afternoon, and she said she liked that one you had on Sunday better than anything she had seen. She didn't want to go to church Sunday morning, but I made her go, and she's glad now she did, for she had been wondering for a week what way she would have her new dress made. I suppose you wouldn't mind lending it to me for a day or so?"

Christie was so surprised at the request that she scarcely knew what to say, but she was really somewhat afraid of this very outspoken woman, so she went meekly up-stairs to get the desired basque, hoping that her caller would soon take her leave, after she had obtained the object of her call.

Mrs. Bush was not ready to take her departure yet, however. She looked at the garment, felt the material critically with her thumb and forefinger, asked the price, and exclaimed,

"Why, that was too much to give for a piece of goods that's no better than this. I'm afraid you ain't a very good manager, and that's a pity, for people don't like to save and scrimp to pay a minister's salary, and then feel that his wife don't know how to take care of it. You'll learn though, I guess, by the time you have had to pinch to make both ends meet. I suppose your head was so full of other

things that you didn't pay much attention to what you were about when you were doing your shopping. Girls don't care, if they can only make a show, whether things are going to wear well or not. I am a good hand at shopping, and I always used to go with Mrs. Brown when she did her shopping, and I used to tell her I made her money go as far again. I will make it convenient to go with you, when you have to buy anything again."

"Thank you. I do not think I shall have occasion to trouble you," said Christie stiffly.

"Oh, it won't be any trouble," said Mrs. Bush, rolling up the basque again, in a way that made Christie tremble for the wrinkles that would be in it.

"I will fold it up for you, Mrs. Bush," she said, holding out her hand for the carelessly twisted package.

"You needn't. It will shake out all right, and I have only a little way to go," Mrs. Bush answered. "I suppose you are pretty comfortable here? I wonder at Mrs. Bateman taking boarders though. It's such a bother, particularly to take a lady boarder. I say I don't care how many men I board, but one woman can make more trouble than ten men. What does she charge you?"

Christie's face flushed a brighter color than before at the impertinence of this question.

"That is an arrangement between my husband and Mrs. Bateman, and if you want any information you had better go to one or the other of them," she

replied, with a dignity that she hoped would quite overpower Mrs. Bush.

She was mistaken in this hope, however, for no one yet had ever been able to disturb that lady's complacency.

"Well, I suppose she didn't care about having any one know, as long as she don't make a practice of taking boarders," said Mrs. Bush. "Mrs. Bateman is a very nice woman only she sets up to be better than the rest of the world. I suppose she tells you just how you must do, and lays down the law to you. That's the way with these awful good people, they want every one else to be just as strict as they are. She's dreadful close mouthed, too. You can't ever get a word out of her about any one. I like folks to be sociable and chatty. Mrs. Brown suited me that way. She used to bring her work and come over and sit with me of an afternoon. I shall expect you to do the same and be real friendly. A minister's wife ought to be social if she wants the people to like her. Some folks said Mrs. Brown spent too much of her time gadding around, but I didn't think so. She was a mighty nice woman and I never expect to see her equal. If you turn out to be as good a worker as Mrs. Brown you needn't ask for anything better. I don't believe you will, for you haven't the way with you that Mrs. Brown had. You could see that she was capable just as soon as you spoke to her, but you're young, and you may grow into it after a while. I guess we have done pretty

well getting your husband. Some folks say his manner isn't hardly cheerful enough, and that he was awful solemn yesterday——"

"I would rather be excused from hearing any more criticisms upon my husband, Mrs. Bush," Christie interposed, with a little tremble in her voice.

Could it be possible that any one had criticised the manner of the preacher, when that earnest sermon had stirred the very depths of her heart, and made her feel as she had never felt before what a grand and beautiful thing life could be when it is wholly consecrated to Christ!

She would not, she could not, endure this dreadful woman another moment. There was no reason why she should submit to her rudeness, and she would excuse herself from her visitor, and go up to her own room where she could escape from these disagreeable remarks.

Fortunately just at this moment the clock struck four, and Mrs. Bush rose to her feet.

"My sakes! I had no idea that it was so late. Mattie says I never notice how the time goes when I get to talking, and I believe it is so. I see you don't like my speaking so plain, but it's my way and you will have to get used to it. I believe in being right out with all you have to say and then no one can say you talk behind people's backs. Come over and see me soon. Mrs. Bateman will tell you where I live, and I shall look for you to be right neighborly and run in every day or so. You'll be a nice compan-

ion for my daughter, and I would like her to be real intimate with you. I dare say you could teach her some little things about painting, for I hear you paint, and I like her to learn all she can. Good-bye!"

"Good-bye," responded Christie, and hardly waiting for the door to shut behind her visitor, she ran up-stairs, and throwing herself upon the bed, with her face buried in the pillow, she burst into tears.

She had always been carefully shielded from contact with disagreeable people, and except the mothers of her children in the mission-class, she had never had any intercourse with any but refined people. These plain people had always been respectful, and to be talked to as bluntly and familiarly as she had been this morning was a new and altogether unpleasant experience to Christie. She wondered how she could ever endure living in the same town with that dreadful Mrs. Bush; and perhaps there were plenty more like her, who would feel at liberty to criticise her all they pleased, and what was far harder to bear, criticise Howe also. If she could only go away from Warrensville, for she could never be happy with such people!

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXPLANATION.

MARTHA, Mrs. Bateman's cook, happened to be out in the yard when Mrs. Bush took her departure, and hearing the gate shut with the decision that characterized all that lady's movements, she glanced up and saw her going down the street. Mrs. Bush was not a favorite with Martha, since the day she had stopped in passing to tell Martha that she did not half sweep the pavement and that if she was her help she would set her to doing it over again.

"I'd sit with my hands in my lap all the rest of my life before I would be your help," Martha had retorted, for she was quite equal to defending herself.

After this skirmish she had heartily disliked Mrs. Bush, and as she had taken a strong liking to Mrs. Stanley, who always spoke pleasantly and never made any unnecessary trouble, she was quite vexed that Mrs. Bateman should not have known of the call, and been present to save Mrs. Stanley from the disagreeable remarks which she was sure Mrs. Bush must have made.

"I see Mrs. Bush just going out of the yard," she said when she returned to the kitchen. "Mrs. Stan-

ley will think there's queer kind of people living in this place if Mrs. Bush has been as agreeable as she generally is."

"Hush, Martha, you ought not to speak in that way," Mrs. Bateman remonstrated. She was a little uneasy however as to what Mrs. Bush might have said, and leaving her jelly in Martha's care, she took off her apron, washed her hands, and went up-stairs in quest of her new friend.

The sound of low sobbing came to her ears as she reached the top of the stairs, and she did not hesitate to enter the room where Christie had thrown herself upon the bed and was giving vent to her grief.

"You poor little girlie!" exclaimed Mrs. Bateman, gathering the girlish figure up in her arms as lovingly as a mother might have done. "It was too bad that you fell into Mrs. Bush's hands without any preparation."

"She was so dreadful!" sobbed Christie. "She said Howe's prayers were too long, and that people criticised him yesterday, and then she said that I must——"

Christie's voice was choked with tears again.

"I can just imagine all the rest of it, dearie," said Mrs. Bateman. "She told you all about Mrs. Brown's virtues, and I assure you it would have been a great comfort to poor Mrs. Brown to know that she had any, for she never had any reason to think that Mrs. Bush approved of anything she did while she was here; and I suppose she told you all that was

expected of ministers' wives; but you mustn't mind anything that Mrs. Bush says."

"I think she is the most perfectly dreadful, rude woman I ever met in all my life," exclaimed Christie indignantly. "I can never like her, and I know Howe cannot when I tell him what she said about him."

"I don't wonder you feel so, knowing only what you do of her, but I want to tell you a little about the good qualties that you will have to find out by degrees. Mrs. Bush reminds me of nothing so much as a chestnut burr, all sharp prickles on the outside, but with real solid goodness hidden away beneath. To be sure you have to run the risk of hurting your hands if you try to get at the nuts, but you will be repaid for the slight scratches. She is one of the most kindhearted people that ever lived, and will do anything for a person in trouble. To be sure she has blunt ways, and will say unpleasant things that make you forget her real goodness in annoyance at her rudeness; but if one knows that there is genuine kindness hidden away beneath her sharp remarks, it isn't quite so hard to think kindly of her, is it? She does not mean to hurt people by her outspoken ways, and I think she rather prides herself upon the independence that leads her to say whatever she thinks. She is not a member of the church, though she is a regular attendant upon the services, but there is no one who is more generous and more ready to work than she is. I know just how she has tried you this

afternoon, dear, but I want to convince you that there is another side which you have not seen. She is not at all sensitive herself, and so she cannot understand why her plain comments should hurt any one else's feelings, and what seems like unkindness in her is only thoughtlessness. I could tell you of ever so many kind things that she has done that I have only heard of by accident through the doctor. You will respect her in spite of her trying ways when you know her as well as I do, and I wish you could feel like forgetting all the disagreeable things she has said this afternoon, and like her a little now."

Christie shook her head.

"I don't see how I can ever like such a blunt coarse woman," she said presently. "If she had not criticised Howe I might have forgotten the things she said to me, but I can't help wishing that I might never see her again."

Mrs. Bateman stroked the fair disordered hair in silence for a few moments.

"Yet I have no doubt she would valiantly stand up for your husband if she heard any one else criticising him. She is one of the warmest admirers your husband has, though I know the last thing she would be apt to tell you would be how much she liked him, and I am very hopeful that he may influence her where every one else has failed. She will make a very earnest whole-hearted Christian when she is once brought to the decision; and when her quick tongue is bridled by the charity that 'suffer-

eth long and is kind,' and only the best of her nature asserts itself, she will be a very lovable character. Don't shed any more tears over her, dear, and let me tell you for your comfort that there is not any one else like her in Warrensville. I know you will be a brave little woman, and for the sake of the good your husband may be able to do her you will bear with her brusque ways and trying speeches. Look upon her only as a precious soul that is well worth saving, and be patient with her. Will you let me give you a little bit of advice, dear, that I would give my own daughter if I had her here in my arms instead of you?"

"Yes, indeed," said Christie.

"I think I would not tell my husband, if I were you, how badly Mrs. Bush made you feel this afternoon. He will naturally feel somewhat resentful toward her for having hurt and wounded you, and she will be very quick to notice any change in his manner. He will have enough to test his patience on his own account, and while he will try to look over things that only concern him, yet he would find it hard to forget that she had brought tears to your eyes. I am so sure that she did it unintentionally that you see I feel like pleading for her. She has no friends, in spite of her many good qualities, for she estranges them all by her hasty tongue, so she is really to be pitied. I do not mean that you must submit quietly to any really impertinent questions or criticisms. If you tell her that you do not wish

to answer such questions or hear such criticisms, she will not repeat them, nor will she take offense at what you say. I only want to urge you not to say anything that will prejudice your husband against her. The criticisms that she made were entirely unnecessary, and it would only hurt him to hear them, and make him feel as if he were being criticised when he had every reason to suppose that the people were in full sympathy with him. I do not mean that you should say nothing about her visit, but don't tell him in such a way that he will feel embittered against Mrs. Bush. There is a humorous side to your experience with her, I think, if you look only for that."

Christie smiled through her tears.

"I do think her whole visit was as funny as anything I ever read of in a book, but indeed it wasn't very pleasant."

"I know that, my dear child. As well as I am acquainted with Mrs. Bush I find her remarks very hard to bear sometimes, and you have my heartiest sympathy. I do want to have your husband feel as kindly as possible toward her, though. Don't you think it will be the best way only to let him see the funny side? You know she is one of his people, and with all her peculiarities she is a loyal helper and friend to her pastor."

"I don't feel so badly about it now," Christie answered. "I won't tell Howe that she made me cry, for I know it would vex him, and very likely he would

tell her not to talk to me that way again; and if she really did not mean it to be disagreeable of course she would feel hurt, and I can see how it would make a very uncomfortable feeling. I will make him laugh over it though, for it was funny. I began to feel quite discouraged when I heard all of Mrs. Brown's excellencies, and found out all that I was expected to be and to do as the minister's wife and the leader in parish work."

"The old adage that 'blessings brighten as they take their flight' will account for a good deal of what Mrs. Bush said," remarked Mrs. Bateman, laughingly. "She has forgotten all the lectures that she felt called upon to give Mrs. Brown every now and then, and I believe she really thinks that they were quite intimate friends. You will find her quite a character, as you come to know her better. I wish for her own sake that she would not hide her real goodness of heart under such a rough exterior, for she does not do herself justice, nor will she let other people think of her as she deserves."

"I will try to make myself look a little less forlorn before Howe comes in," said Christie, rising and looking at her tear-stained face in the glass. "Do you know I don't feel a bit badly about it any more, but indeed when you came in I was wishing with all my heart that I could go home. You were so kind to comfort me! I will try not to mind anything like that so much next time. She rather frightened me, she was so very decided in her opinions,

and seemed so despondent about my capabilities as a minister's wife."

Christie could laugh now over the call that had seemed so formidable at first, and before Mrs. Bateman went back to her jelly all the traces of tears were gone. The letter she had been writing was enriched by a merry account of the interruption, and when Howe came in and learned of her visitor, he had no idea that a shower had followed her departure.

Mrs. Bateman had been very wise in suggesting to Christie not to complain of Mrs. Bush's brusqueness, for Howe would have been inclined to resent it, and Mrs. Bush would have promptly vindicated her rights of free speech by severing her connection with the congregation. Those who knew how much good material was hidden beneath that unprepossessing exterior were anxious that the slight bond of interest that held her to the church should be strengthened rather than loosened until she should be caught and held fast in the chains of love. There was material there for a grand Christian, one who would be fearless in standing up for her principles and upholding the right, and such material was too rare to be lightly discarded because of its defects.

CHAPTER XIV.

OPENING NEW PATHS.

THE first few weeks slipped away very pleasantly and quickly, while Christie was fitting herself into her new niche. It was a great delight to her to feel that Howe could work better for having her interest and sympathy in everything that he did; and Sunday evenings, when he was tired after his day's work and apt to be discouraged over his failures to come up to the high ideal he had set for himself, she enjoyed talking over the day with him, and praising with a wife's loving partiality all that had been most helpful in his words.

In the morning, after the two rooms had been put in the dainty order which characterized all Christie's belongings, she would take her work and sit quietly beside him in the little rocking-chair, where whenever he glanced up he could see the fair head bent over her sewing. She had time now to take a great many stitches on the various articles that would be needed when their home-making began, and it was pleasant to have their nesting to look forward to, for happy as they were beneath Mrs. Bateman's hospitable roof, yet they both longed for a home of their own.

It seemed like rather a selfish life to Christie, for she had been so used to taking an active part in the church work that she missed her class and the many other duties that she had made her own. It so happened that there was no special need of her services in the Sunday-school nor in the missionary meeting. Her attendance was all that was desired, and accustomed as she was to feeling some responsibility, she sometimes thought almost regretfully of the threads she had dropped in her old home when she came here.

A willing worker, however, never has to wait very long for employment, and some work soon came to her hands. One Sunday the young girl who usually assisted the teacher of the infant-class by keeping the little ones in order, was absent, and Christie was asked if she would assist with the children.

She was very fond of little ones, and she willingly consented.

"It's such a dreadful class to teach," sighed Miss Nelson, the teacher, as she sat beside Christie during the opening exercises. "I get enough of the children when I am teaching them, so I don't sit with them this part of the time. I couldn't keep so many of them in order any way, and I just let them scatter around and do the best they can. They most all of them sit with their older sisters, so they get kept in order that way. They are such a stupid set of children, and they never seem to learn anything, no matter how hard I try to teach them. Thank good-

ness, I only have two more Sundays to be with them, for Mr. Moore has promised to give me another class then, and get some one else for the infant-class. You will see to-day what a discouraging class it is."

Christie was somewhat embarrassed by the stream of whispered comments that her companion kept up all through the opening exercises. She did not answer except when it was absolutely necessary, and showed as plainly as she could that she wished to listen to the reading and join in the singing; but the loquacious young lady kept on talking even without the encouragement of a response. At last Christie felt constrained to say,

"Don't you think we had better join in the responses? We are setting a bad example to the children, I am afraid."

It was quite an effort for Christie to utter even this gentle rebuke, for she did not like to seem to censure any one, but Miss Nelson was evidently not at all hurt by the suggestion.

"Oh, I suppose a minister's wife always has to act just so," she said laughingly. "I forgot that. Well, we shall have some time for talking after the lesson is done. I never can find enough to talk about to fill up the time."

When the exercises were concluded, and the classes began to study the lesson, the little ones flocked into a place behind the library which was evidently used partly for a lumber as well as for an infant-class-room. It was not an inviting room, and this hot

September afternoon it seemed insupportably hot and close.

"I do wish the sexton would remember to open this window Sunday mornings," said Miss Nelson petulantly. "It is hot enough to melt one in here, and the children behave twice as badly when it is too hot. Sit down, children, and I will try to get this window open."

It yielded to her vigorous efforts, and a refreshing breath of air came in with the bright rays of the sun which were not shut out in any way, for the room had no blinds or screens.

Christie sighed for the class-room at Weston as she had time to glance about this room while Miss Nelson was taking off her gloves and preparing for her work. Not many Sunday-schools were better equipped in the matter of an infant-class-room than the Sunday-school at Weston. It was a well aired, sunshiny room, with the leafy boughs of an old elm which grew just outside the window shutting out the summer's heat, while plenty of sunshine came through the bare branches in winter. A cheery crimson carpet in winter, and cool matting in summer, covered the floor, and rows of dear little chairs, low enough for the feet of the little occupants to rest on the floor, were the seats. There was a blackboard, a small organ, a table for the teacher's use, and a vase upon it which was always kept supplied with flowers. The teacher was always chosen from the best talent the school afforded, and it was looked upon as a

very responsible and honorable post, needing careful preparation.

A greater contrast could hardly have been presented than was offered by the class and its teacher now introduced to her. The room showed that no effort had been expended to make it inviting or even neat. The bare floor was dusty, and the children with much climbing and pushing had seated themselves upon high benches from which their feet dangled in a most uncomfortable way. The smaller children looked as if they were in imminent danger of toppling over backward as they twisted about restlessly, and the older ones balanced on the front of the benches and rested the tips of their toes on the floor for support.

There was no blackboard nor any other appurtenance for making the lesson interesting, and it was very evident from Miss Nelson's first remark that she had not done anything in the way of preparation.

"Do you know where the lesson is?" she asked Christie, taking up her Bible. "I forgot to bring my lesson help, and I don't like to ask Mr. Moore for another, I have asked him so many times already this quarter."

It seemed almost incredible to Christie, who was accustomed from her earliest childhood to spend some time each day on the preparation of the lesson for Sunday, that any one, and especially a teacher, should have come to Sunday-school actually ignorant of the whereabouts of the lesson. She gave the

desired information, trying to keep her surprise out of her face and voice. Evidently it was not an unusual occurrence, for Miss Nelson did not seem to be at all embarrassed by it, nor consider that it needed any apology.

As she was finding her place, a little boy slipped off his seat and came shyly up to her.

"Here, teacher," he said, putting a bunch of drooping flowers on her lap.

He had been clasping them tightly in his fat hot hand all through the preliminary exercises, and they looked sadly wilted. It looked like a bouquet that the child had made himself, for the stems were tied together with a thick piece of twine, and the flowers were massed together in a firm ball. There was not anything inviting about the gift, but the shy smile and the admiring look in the dark eyes were very attractive to Christie, who was a child lover.

"Oh, don't put them there; lay them on that chair," exclaimed Miss Nelson, shaking out the folds of her pretty summer dress. "They are always bringing something like that," she went on to Christie, in an audible aside that all the children could easily hear. "I don't know what to do with them I am sure, for they aren't fit for anything by the time the children carry them around for an hour or two, if indeed they were pretty to begin with. They used to expect to hang around me and hug and kiss me, but I soon broke that up. It does spoil one's clothes so to have children pulling on one."

There was a disappointed look in the child's dark eyes that appealed strongly to Christie's warm heart.

"May I have one or two of your flowers?" she asked, and as Miss Nelson assented in a surprised tone, she took a little cluster of the wilted blossoms and pinned them on her dress with a pleasant smile at the child, who flashed back such a radiant glance as he saw that his little gift was appreciated by some one, that Christie was assured that she had comforted him for his disappointment with his teacher.

"Now, who remembers the golden text for last Sunday?" asked Miss Nelson.

There was no response and she repeated her inquiry.

"Now, you don't mean to say you have all forgotten it, after all the times we went over it! I am ashamed to have Mrs. Stanley know what a stupid class I have."

"Start it for us, teacher, and maybe we'll remember it," said one of the oldest girls, who evidently wished to save the reputation of the class.

This was an unexpected request, and Miss Nelson actually looked embarrassed.

She turned toward Christie with a deprecating smile.

"Would you believe I've actually forgotten it myself?" she said. "I thought I remembered it, but it has slipped out of my head somehow. It's so provoking to forget anything like that. I expect you

will think I am a pretty poor teacher by the time I forget a few more things. Will you prompt me, if you remember it, please?"

As soon as Christie uttered the first few words she recalled the whole verse, and turned toward the children, bidding them repeat it too. Only a few of them knew it, and for a few minutes Miss Nelson concentrated all her energies on making the whole class, including the very youngest ones, repeat it again and again, until they could say it after a fashion.

"Now I shall ask you to say it next Sunday, and I shall not like it at all if you forget it. It's very naughty to forget your golden texts just as soon as you learn them."

"You forgot it yourself, teacher," said the child who had asked to be prompted.

"Well, it's a very different thing if I forget, because I have a great many other things to think about, and I can't remember everything, but you ought to."

This seemed a conclusive argument to Miss Nelson, and apparently it satisfied the children, for they said no more.

"Listen, now, and I will read over the lesson for to-day, and then I will ask you questions, and you can see how much you remember of it," said Miss Nelson, and she read over the verses, without any comment or explanation. It was not an easy lesson, nor one that was particularly adapted to childish

comprehensions, and without any attempt at simplifying the difficulties, Christie was not surprised that the children could not respond to any of the questions that the teacher asked.

"Now you see how little attention they pay to the lesson, Mrs. Stanley," exclaimed Miss Nelson.

Christie saw also that the teacher had no idea of making the lesson intelligible, and she wondered how the children could ever learn anything with such an incapable instructor.

"Howard, stop squeaking your shoes; you make my blood run cold," said Miss Nelson sharply, to a small boy who was amusing himself by noisily squeaking his new shoes, with evident pride in the noise they made.

Howard obeyed promptly, and twisted himself upon the bench again where his feet would be out of temptation's way.

"Did you bring your pennies?" asked Miss Nelson, who had evidently concluded the lesson for the day.

Several small hands were waved about in the air, and Miss Nelson smiled approvingly.

"Johnnie Watson, you may take the pennies up in your hat."

"Oh, teacher!" wailed a little boy on the back seat. "You said I might this Sunday. You truly did. First you let Willie Davis, and then last Sunday it was Bertie Dunn's turn, and you said I should take the pennies to-day. Can't I?"

"No, she just said I could," persisted Johnnie,

beginning to collect the money, regardless of all protests.

"No, she said I could; she said so last week, and it isn't fair, so!"

"Miss Nelson, can't I?"

"Miss Nelson, let me!"

"Aren't you ashamed of yourselves?" asked Miss Nelson severely, as the dispute grew warm. "What do you suppose Mrs. Stanley will think of such bad boys? I declare I am mortified to have you behave so. What difference does it make, Ned, who takes up the pennies? Let Johnnie do it, now he has begun, and you can do it another Sunday."

"No, I can't, for you won't remember. It will be just like it was this Sunday," protested Ned indignantly. "I think you are mean!"

"You are a very naughty boy to talk so rudely to your teacher. Come out here, and stand on the floor where all the children can see you. I shall tell your mamma when I see her just how you behave in Sunday-school," said Miss Nelson severely.

Ned sullenly obeyed, digging his chubby fists in his eyes to rub away the tears that would come at his disgrace. With a child's keen sense of injustice he knew that he had been wronged, and his little heart was filled with bitterness. Christie's sympathies were wholly with the little culprit, and as he stood on the floor facing the class her heart ached for him. She motioned to him to come to her, and slipped her arm about him. The sullen frown that

had disfigured his face vanished, and he was quite happy, in spite of his disappointment and punishment, as he stood by his new friend. Miss Nelson was distributing the little Sunday-school papers, and counting the pennies, so Christie had a chance to talk to the little fellow without being overheard by the rest of the class. Without criticising his teacher, she made him feel that she sympathized with him in his disappointment, which, trifling as it might seem to a grown person, was, she knew, a very different thing to a child, and then she led him to see that he ought to tell Miss Nelson that he was sorry for having spoken so rudely to her. It was not very easy to convince him that he ought to be sorry for his angry words, but she succeeded at last, and he promised that he would tell Miss Nelson so after Sunday-school.

"I like you," he said, looking up into Christie's face with his frank blue eyes. "I wish you were our teacher."

Christie wished so too, with all her heart. She had never considered that she was fit to take as important a class as the infant-class, but she was sure that she would make the attempt, at least, to interest and teach the little ones committed to her care.

By the time Miss Nelson had read the children a little story in their illustrated paper, and gone over the golden text with them, the bell rang and with a sigh of relief she dismissed them.

"Oh, is Ned bothering you?" she asked, as she turned around and saw the little boy leaning against Christie.

"No, indeed," said Christie quickly, as she saw the sullen look coming back to the childish face. "I called him to me. I think Ned has something to say to you, Miss Nelson."

Straightening himself up, Ned said bravely,

"I'm sorry I said you was mean, teacher."

"You ought to be sorry, for you were a very naughty little boy," said Miss Nelson, evidently thinking that a lecture on his sins was the proper thing to bestow upon the boy. "I hope you will never be so naughty again, for no one can like you when you are not good. Now here is your paper. Run along, and don't bother Mrs. Stanley any more."

"That was right, dear," said Christie, drawing the child close to her and kissing the downcast face before he left her.

Miss Nelson looked amazed.

"Do you like children?" she asked. "I can't bear them, the tiresome little things! I don't have any patience with them, and I suppose that is the reason I don't get along with them better."

"I love them dearly," Christie answered, "and I think you have some dear little children in your class."

"Would you be willing to take that class?" asked Miss Nelson eagerly. "Oh, I should be so glad if you would, for I do hate to teach it so! I declare I

don't like to see Sunday come, just on that account. Do say you will!"

Her earnestness left no room for doubt that she was sincere in her wish to be relieved of the class, and Christie replied,

"I should have no objection to taking the class of course, if the superintendent is willing, but it must rest with him."

"I am sure he will only be too glad," said Miss Nelson, and as they entered the main room just then and passed near the superintendent, she exclaimed,

"Oh, Mr. Moore, I know you will be as glad as I am to hear that Mrs. Stanley is willing to take the infant-class. She just told me she would if you were willing."

"I am very glad to hear it indeed," said Mr. Moore, with a pleased look. "Miss Nelson has found it such an irksome class that I have been trying to relieve her of it for some time, but could not find any one willing to take such a difficult class. Thank you, Mrs. Stanley. I shall be pleased to have you assume your new charge next Sunday, if that will suit Miss Nelson also."

"The sooner the better as far as I am concerned," answered that young lady. "I suppose the children will be as glad to get rid of me as I am to get rid of them, so it will be a mutual pleasure."

Thus opened Christie's first path of usefulness in her new field.

CHAPTER XV.

WORK.

CHRISTIE would have felt as if it was a very formidable undertaking to assume the charge of the infant-class in Weston after the very capable and conscientious teacher who had devoted her best energies to it for years, but she was not at all afraid but that she could improve upon her predecessor here.

To begin with, she loved children and tried to understand them, and had the patience which is one of the prime requisites for a successful teacher. She was accustomed to make a careful and thorough preparation of the lesson, and she knew, too, how very important it was that the room should be made cheery and inviting, so that the children would have pleasant associations with their Sunday's lesson. That very Sunday evening she began her preparation by talking the lesson for the following Sunday over with Howe, after she had given him an account of the methods of the teacher who had had the class. Every day she spent half an hour in thought and reading, and she was always on the watch for any little incident that would serve as a practical illustration to impress the meaning of the lesson upon the minds and hearts of the children.

Friday afternoon she procured the keys of the church, and accompanied by her husband went over to see what she could do in the way of making the room more attractive. She had asked Mr. Moore if she might make some little changes in the room, and he had given her cordial permission to do anything she liked in the matter.

"Our infant-class has never been much of a success, and I should be glad to have some one take it who took some interest in it and knew how to teach. I know some teachers like a blackboard. If you would care to have one, I have one at my house that I will send over for you, and if there is anything else that you would like, I will do all I can to get you what you need. Things are not in very good trim in that room, but I am in hopes that some day we can build a little room on purpose for the infant-class and fit it up nicely."

"I shall be delighted to have the blackboard," said Christie, who had been secretly wondering how she could teach the little ones without one. "Perhaps I can do something myself to fit the room up before Sunday."

When she went to the church on Friday she found that Mr. Moore had been as good as his word, and had already sent the blackboard, with a box of colored crayons. The room needed sweeping as much as anything else, and tucking up her dress, Christie found a broom in the closet under the stairs

among the sexton's utensils and proceeded to give the room a better cleaning than it had had for years.

She sent a little note to Mrs. Bateman by Howe, whom she speedily routed when the dust began to fly, asking if she could spare Martha to bring over a pail of water and some cloths to wash the windows.

"I just want to try a little house-cleaning on my own account," she wrote. "I won't keep Martha, if she may just bring over the things for me. I am afraid it would excite too much curiosity to have Mr. Stanley carry them."

By the time the dust had subsided, Martha made her appearance armed with everything necessary for washing the windows, and insisted upon staying, notwithstanding all Christie's remonstrances.

"Mrs. Bateman won't want me for anything and I might just as well stay as not," persisted Martha. "It won't take me any time to wash that window, and it's my afternoon out anyway, so it's no matter what I do. I haven't anything to do at home, and I would rather do this than not."

Finding that Martha was quite determined to have her own way in the matter, Christie yielded, and while Martha was making the dull dust-coated glass shine beneath her strong hands, Christie and her husband spent their united efforts upon the blackboard, drawing an illustration for the lesson. They were neither of them especially gifted in drawing, but their work presented a very creditable appear-

ance when it was finished, and Christie was sure that her young audience would not be very critical.

"If we could only have low seats, so that the poor little things would not have to sit with their feet dangling," said Christie. "I suppose when Mr. Moore made his kind offer of trying to supply me with anything that I needed, he did not anticipate that I would ask for anything as great as new seats. I really don't see how the children can behave well nor how they can listen when they are as uncomfortable as they must be with these hard high benches. Oh, Howe, couldn't we possibly contrive something better than this in the way of seats?"

Mr. Stanley looked at the benches thoughtfully for some moments. "I don't see what is to be done except to buy new ones," he remarked at last. "And I am sure that couldn't be done for a time. I am sorry, Christie dear, both for you and the children."

"We haven't enough in our 'tenth box'?" asked Christie.

Both husband and wife had always laid aside a tenth for charitable purposes, and one of the first acts of their married life had been to lay aside a tenth of the salary, that they might have opportunity to indulge themselves in the luxury of giving whenever the call for benevolence came.

The sum thus laid aside was not a very large one, and even as Christie asked the question she knew that it could not possibly be enough to compass her wishes.

"No, dear, the money we have would only go a very little way in seats, so I am afraid there is nothing to do but to wait."

Christie was lost in thought for a few moments, and then a sudden inspiration seized her, and she exclaimed,

"Oh, I have thought of the simplest way in the world to remedy the difficulty. When I tell you what it is you will wonder that we did not both think of it at once."

"What is it?" asked her husband. "I cannot imagine what bright idea you have conceived. I must confess I think nothing but new seats can solve the trouble."

"If Mr. Moore is willing, we might saw the legs of these benches off to just the right height for the children," said Christie. "Now, isn't that a simple solution? Of course it won't be half or three quarters as nice as having little chairs or new benches, but it will certainly make these comfortable, which, after all, is the main thing. I don't believe Mr. Moore would object. We might go and ask him now, and if he is willing, we could find a carpenter to do it this very afternoon, and have them all ready for Sunday."

"I think I am carpenter enough to do that," said Howe. "I see Mr. Moore crossing the street now. I will go over and ask him."

As Christie had anticipated, Mr. Moore was perfectly willing to consent to the proposed plan, and

volunteered to bring a couple of saws and help Mr. Stanley in the task.

He soon came back accompanied by two small children.

"I thought I would bring these two along to measure the seats by, and see when we got them a comfortable height for the little ones," he explained.

In a very short time one bench had been reduced to a height which enabled the children's feet to rest comfortably on the floor, and they were dismissed while Mr. Stanley and Mr. Moore went on with their work. Christie had made a pilgrimage to the cellar to put away the broom in the meantime, and while she was down there she saw among some other things a roll of pieces of red carpet which had been left over the last time the pulpit had been re-carpeted. Before she reached the room which had been temporarily converted into a carpenter's shop, an idea had occurred to her, which she promptly proceeded to disclose. The benches were so well worn and defaced by penknives that they were anything but objects of beauty. If they were covered with this red carpet, neatly tacked on, they would be not only more sightly, but more comfortable also.

Both the gentlemen agreed with her plan, and while they finished their part of the work, Christie insisted upon being allowed to tack the carpet on as her share of the improvements.

Supper-time approached before the work was com-

pleted, and Christie reluctantly had to surrender her hammer and leave her task

"The room looks very much better already, doesn't it?" she asked, as she turned for one farewell survey.

"It certainly does," said Howe warmly.

"The little folks won't know what to make of it," said Mr. Moore, who was very much pleased at the interest Christie was taking in her new class. "I shall listen to hear what my little grandchildren have to say about their new teacher next Sunday."

It did not take very long the following morning to finish covering the little benches, and they really looked very pretty and inviting, compared with the old seats. One piece of the carpet about two yards long Christie had spread down in front of the seats, and she had found a little stand which was sometimes used to hold flowers in the church, and temporarily appropriated it to her use. She determined that a vase of the prettiest flowers she could find should be upon the table on Sunday, and she was sure that the children would appreciate the improved appearance of the room. The sun would be somewhat excluded too, for Mr. Moore had offered, when his attention was called to the shadeless window, to put up a shade before Sunday.

"I ought to have paid attention to these things before," he said apologetically. "It's too bad that I have been so slack about things; but nobody seemed to care, and so I just got in the way of letting things go."

Christie was quite impatient for Sunday to come that she might see the little ones' pleasure, and her heart went out to the children who were to be her special charge. She was glad to see the look of pleasure on the little faces when Mr. Moore announced in Sunday-school that Mrs. Stanley would take charge of the infant-class, and her little friend of the preceding Sunday, Ned Lewis, came over and sat by her during the opening exercises with a gratified air of proprietorship that was very amusing to see.

That first hour with their new teacher was a very delightful one to the children, who, young as they were, had understood that they had been a very unwelcome charge to any of their former teachers. They had had three different teachers in the last year, and each change made them more restless and dissatisfied. It was something quite out of the ordinary order of events to be actually welcomed by a teacher, and that teacher the new minister's wife, whom they had heard their big brothers and sisters wishing for a teacher. The dull lifeless routine was entirely abandoned, and their interest in what their new teacher would do and say next kept them spellbound with attention.

After Christie had told them in a few bright words how glad she was to become their teacher, and that she was sure they would help her all that they could by being attentive and quiet, she rang a little bell which she told them was a signal to rise.

With folded hands and reverently bowed heads they repeated the Lord's Prayer after her, petition by petition, and after that a simple prayer that even the youngest child could understand and join in.

Then they sang the first two verses of a sweet little hymn, the words of which they quickly learned; and after that came the lesson.

"We never had that kind of a lesson before," remarked Ned, drawing a long breath at its conclusion, and it is probable that they never had had a lesson made so clear and plain to them before, and enriched with so many illustrations which their childish minds could grasp. There was no inattention, no restlessness, and the comfortable seats were fully appreciated. Christie tested her success by asking questions, and she was surprised to find how retentive their memories were and how readily they had grasped the lesson story.

Before they had time to weary she gave them an opportunity for a change of position. She taught them to march one by one from their seats, singing the little hymn she had taught them at the opening of the lesson, and as they passed her on their way to their seats again, to drop their pennies in a basket she had provided for that purpose. There were several advantages connected with this plan. It rested the little ones by giving them a little exercise, it was an orderly way for the collection of pennies, and the children never forgot to bring their money after this plan had been in operation for two or three

Sundays, for they were so eager to join in the march and hymn that they were sure to remember their penny.

After the pennies had been collected, Christie taught them the golden text, sentence by sentence, and just as they were able to say it in concert the bell rang, and the time which was usually so tedious both to the little ones and their teacher had slipped away unobserved. When Mr. Moore asked the school as usual for the golden text for the day, he was surprised, as indeed was every one else, to hear a full chorus in response from the infant-class, who had come out in orderly file and were sitting together, with Christie among them, in the front seats which were always left for their use.

"How do you like your new teacher?" he asked one of the little ones afterward.

The child was holding Christie's hand, and when she heard the question she tightened her clasp and looked up to meet Christie's answering smile before she responded.

"She's awful nice," she answered emphatically. "She likes us too, Mr. Moore; and oh, it's so nice to have a teacher that likes us!"

Love begets love always, but perhaps no hearts are quite as responsive as child hearts, and because she loved little children and wanted to make them happy, Christie had had no difficulty in winning their affection in return.

It had been a happy day to her, though she had

been unusually tired with her unaccustomed exertions, but fatigue was sweet when it was work in the Master's service that had wearied her. She had the comforting sense that she had not been unsuccessful in her undertaking, and it was a pleasure to her to talk over the doings and sayings of the children with her husband, who was as interested in her work as if it had been his own.

CHAPTER XVI.

NEW PLANS.

"WELL, what do you think of these meetings, Christie?"

The husband and wife were walking homeward together after prayer-meeting, and a thoughtful silence had been preserved between them instead of their usual flow of conversation.

"Should you feel discouraged if I really told you just what I thought of them?" asked Christie.

"No, that is what I want, an honest expression of your opinion," answered her husband. "You always say something encouraging about them, but it seems as if to-night's meeting was past even your optimism. I should like to think that it was the meeting rather than that I was so wholly out of accord with the spirit of the meeting that I could not enjoy it. What do you really think? It won't discourage me at all to have you say anything about it, and perhaps if we admit that it is not a success, we can have some improvement."

"It will really relieve my mind then, since you are sure you won't feel hurt at what I say, to confess that I think they are not by any means what they ought to be," admitted Christie. "It isn't your fault, I know,

Howe. Your talks are good and carefully prepared, but you can't fill up all the time yourself, and you have not very much help, and there is no variety in what you have. I was looking at the people to-night, and thinking that young people could hardly have absented themselves more unanimously if there had been an age limit fixed, and you had invited those of fifty and over to attend. Really you and I were the only young people there. Then there are only Mr. Harper and Mr. Griswold who are regularly present and whom you can depend upon for help; for it does seem, as Doctor Bateman says, as if people saved up for Sundays and prayer-meeting night to get sick and send for him in a hurry. When he is there he always has something bright and interesting to say, but neither of the other gentlemen ever do anything but pray, and so the only variety you can have in the meeting is to have Mr. Griswold pray first one evening and Mr. Harper the next. It would sound very funny if you should say, 'We will vary the exercises of this meeting by asking Brother Griswold to lead us in prayer first this evening, after which Brother Harper will follow him,' but that is really all the variation you can make, as far as I see. If the singing wasn't so wretched, things wouldn't be so bad, but it is simply a dreary wail instead of anything jubilant, and the brightest hymns you can select seem positively funereal when they are so feebly sung. Nobody who can sing well ever comes. I did wish this evening that I could sing loudly enough

to be heard three seats off, but my voice is so weak and low that I can't do any better than any one else. I really am not fit to even teach the infant-class to sing, but there the room is small, and there is no instrument, so the children hear all of my voice that there is to hear. It would kill any meeting, I verily believe, to have Antioch sung so dolefully. Then those pauses after you have thrown the meeting open are so sepulchral. If you threw open the door on a cold winter's night you could not kill the meeting any more effectually. It's a lonesome sort of meeting, too, if you don't mind my finding fault with so many things. There are never more than fifteen people at the outside, and far more frequently there are only twelve. If they would all sit up close together in the front seat, and be sociable, it would seem as if there were more of them, but every one sinks into a back seat, as far away from every one else as he can get consistently with securing a seat near the door, and even your urgent invitation to them to-night to come forward only brought them up to the ninth pew from the front."

"I felt like walking down to them, as they would not come up to me," said Mr. Stanley. "My only trouble was that as you had dutifully seated yourself at my bidding in the very front seat, I should have had to leave you behind me. The room is only half-ventilated and half-lighted too, and I think an uncomfortable room can detract a great deal from the spirituality of any meeting. I was quite enthu-

siastic when I went around there this evening. I had really enjoyed preparing myself, and the subject was an inspiriting one, but the room or the audience or something chilled me in spite of myself, and I caught myself taking a very dreary view of what had seemed so bright and cheering a little while before. We must do something to improve these meetings or they will become utterly frozen soon. I have urged and entreated people to come, privately and from the pulpit, and they will not. The only thing to do is to make the meetings so attractive that they will want to come. I wonder if there is any way to conquer the obstacles that seem to be insuperable!"

"Let's take them up one by one," said Christie, as they entered their own door, "and perhaps we can vanquish some of them at any rate."

Seated in their cosy sitting-room they resumed the subject, and for some time talked long and earnestly. It was a hard problem to solve, and one which had perplexed many a pastor before Mr. Stanley, but where there is a determination to succeed a more or less degree of success will be attained.

They had been silent for some little time, trying to think of some plan to suggest to each other, when a brighter look chased away the network of thoughtful wrinkles on Christie's forehead, and she exclaimed,

"I think I am getting 'hot' as the children say. I really believe I have at least the glimmer of an idea that may be of some service. I was talking to Mrs. Bateman the other day about organizing a

circle of King's Daughters, and perhaps we could concentrate their energies upon the prayer-meeting with good results. The girls that I have in mind are members of the Bible-class, and are all able to be of a great deal of assistance, if they wish to be. Mrs. Bateman has told me that she has done her best to get them to attend the prayer-meeting, but they will only come now and then in a very desultory fashion, and of course they find little to enjoy there, so they do not come again until Mrs. Bateman has done a good deal more urging. There would be one immediate result attained if they would all attend. They all have good voices, and lead the singing in Sunday-school, and if we had their voices at the prayer-meeting, the singing would be bright and spirited."

"That is a capital idea," answered her husband, "and I have one which will supplement it. I was just thinking that our first step must be to get up something of special interest to bring the people out once, and then if we can have a really interesting meeting, they will be willing to come again. My thought was that our first meeting should be a praise service, and we should make very careful preparation and have the singing particularly attractive. This will ensure a somewhat larger attendance, for, to begin with, the young people who are to help with the singing will be there, and some of their friends will of course be sufficiently interested to come and hear the music."

"It would be nice if we could manage to have the

lecture-room more attractive than usual in some way," added Christie. "If it is as dark and gloomy looking as usual, it will be hard to make the meeting seem really bright. Suppose you and I go around before prayer-meeting time and supplement the sexton's labors in a greater or less degree as we see necessary. Or, I believe I have a better idea than that. What do you think of appointing a committee to put some flowers there, and as it is an unusual service, decorate the reading-desk with flowers and make the room attractive in any way that we can? I believe that room could be made to look really cheery if it was well lighted and had a cared-for look. I should like to see it well filled, too, for once. I do think that it is a splendid plan, Howe, for every one is fond of music, and people who would not come to a prayer-meeting will come to hear singing."

"Next week is the monthly concert for missions, but the week after that we will put our ideas into execution and see what the results will be. Your part will be to get the girls together and see that they prepare some good music. I will give you a list of the hymns I shall use, and then you can choose some others besides that you think are favorites. I will do my part toward making the evening as interesting as possible, and for once, at least, we will revolutionize that dreary meeting. Let us talk our plans over with our good friends and see if they approve of them."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Bateman cordially, when Mr. Stanley told her what they had been talking about. "The very novelty of the praise service will draw people out, and then I am sure they will come again when they find how interesting our meetings can be. There is an enthusiasm in numbers, and the mere fact of a large attendance on that one evening will create an interest."

When Dr. Bateman came in a little later he was not too tired with a long drive to enter as heartily as his wife had done into the proposed plans, and he promised to aid them in any way he could.

"If I could sing, now, I might be of some practical use, but I don't know one note from another, so my helpfulness won't lie in that direction. I will do all I can in the way of speaking of it and urging people to come, and that will amount to something."

"What we really need is a Christian Endeavor Society," said Mr. Stanley. "Then we should have a corps of workers to call on for assistance in any or all of the services."

"Yes, I should like to see a flourishing Christian Endeavor Society in existence here," agreed the doctor cordially. "There was some talk of it a year ago, but some people were so opposed to it that we thought it for the best good of the church to let the matter drop."

"Opposed to it!" echoed Christie in surprise. "Why, what could any one find to oppose in it?"

"Well, as a church we are very conservative,"

answered the doctor. "Some people, when they heard that boys and girls alike took part in the young people's meetings, thought it was unscriptural, and quoted Paul to prove it. Others again thought it was giving the young people undue prominence, and that there would be danger of their having things their own way in the church if they were allowed to take such active part; and so the objections ran, none of them valid to those who were in favor of the society, but sufficiently strong to those who were opposed to it. When we found it would create positive dissension, we abandoned the idea, and trusted that time would bring about changes in the minds of some of the people. I do not know whether the time is quite ripe for the subject to be renewed yet or not; but I trust it will not be very long before we can have an active society here. It is just what we want, for the very people who are opposed to the young people being allowed to do the work will not take any of it upon their own shoulders, and so it is left undone."

"I wish those who are opposed to it could attend just one of our young people's social meetings of our Christian Endeavor Society at Weston," said Christie. "I am sure that would convert them at once, they are always so earnest and so well attended, and our pastor says he looks upon our meetings as a training-school where he can look for his helpers in the church prayer-meeting. There were ever so many things in church work that were always left for us to do, and

I don't think any of the older people felt as if we were taking things out of their hands."

"There need be no reason for such a feeling," answered Dr. Bateman. "The work that the young people do in this society is, as far as I can learn about it, work that they are particularly fitted to do, and which belongs to their sphere. It was the people who knew nothing at all about the matter, as usual, that were the most pronounced in their objections. Their eyes will be opened soon to the important factor in the success of our church, as a working, spiritual church, that they are leaving out of account. Perhaps we can gradually change their opinions by using the valuable material which is in our church in a crude state at the present, but which can and should be moulded into shape for the future pillars of the church when the present generation has passed away."

CHAPTER XVII.

CARRYING OUT PLANS.

With Mr. Stanley and his wife, to plan was to accomplish, and the next two weeks were full of preparation for the praise service which they hoped would prove attractive to the people. One thing was certain, the prayer-meeting must be extricated from the ruts in which it had been running for so long, and Mr. Stanley was sure that he could sufficiently vary the exercises, if he could only find helpers, to make it an interesting and helpful service.

Christie's first work was to carry out her plan of organizing the older girls into a circle of King's Daughters, and she felt quite sure that they would be willing to undertake any work that might be suggested to them.

The peculiar charm of Christie's manner, which had won all hearts in her girlhood's home, drew these girls irresistibly toward her, and they were delighted when they found that in this new society they would be brought into close contact with the new minister's wife. Most of them were in Mrs. Bateman's class, and they all loved their teacher, but Christie had all the charm of youth and novelty to

enlist them in her service. With a heart full of love for her girls, and a great desire to help them make the best of themselves in every way, there was still much that Mrs. Bateman could not do, for her hands were very full of household cares, and she could not give them the time and companionship which she felt were desirable.

In an upper sunny chamber, made as homelike and comfortable as possible, was an invalid to whom Mrs. Bateman devoted every available moment. It had been a long labor of love. For ten years she had cared for her husband's aunt as tenderly and faithfully as if it had been a dearly loved mother instead of one whom she had never seen until the light of reason had grown dim in her eyes and the body had survived its tenant, the mind.

As helpless as an infant, almost as irresponsive, and seemingly capable of but one feeling besides that of consciousness of bodily comfort and discomfort, the invalid clung to her nephew's wife with a dependence as great as that of a little child for its mother. Mrs. Bateman's presence was the one thing that would call a gleam of pleasure into the dull eyes, and if she was long absent from her side she would call for her again and again until she returned to the bedside.

There were many labors of love that Mrs. Bateman would gladly have undertaken in the church, and many a neglected corner of the vineyard which she would have willingly tilled, but she would not

put aside this task which had been set her for any other work of her own choosing. There were many people who thought that she ought to delegate entirely to a nurse's care a charge who had so little claim upon her time; and she was even criticised for not doing more in the church, instead of confining herself so much in the sick-room. Mrs. Bateman troubled herself little about these criticisms, however. She could have found many a more congenial task than spending her hours in patient ministrations at the bedside of the childish old woman, who could not understand nor appreciate the burden that she had become, and was as unreasonable and petulant as a spoiled child if her wants were not attended to at once. She showed a marked aversion to strangers, so no one ever entered her room but Mrs. Bateman and her husband, with the nurse who had to stay with the invalid during the hours when Mrs. Bateman's household duties rendered it imperative that she should be elsewhere.

"Perfect slavery" some people called it, marveling much at the unselfishness with which Mrs. Bateman let this charge interfere with so much that she might have enjoyed; but it was not a slavery; it was a glad and willing service. There was one thought that made that sunny upper chamber a veritable sanctuary, and it was a thought that Mrs. Bateman had taught herself to bear continually in mind—

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

If the Christ had lain helpless and as a little child within her doors, would she not gladly have laid aside every other occupation to minister to his wants? and if instead of glorifying her house by his own presence, he had sent instead this frail, worn-out body to her with the promise that whatever she did in his name he would accept as service done for him personally, was not such service a joyous privilege instead of hardship?

It was a thought that lent a strange sweetness to the simplest deed, and glorified each personal service until that upper room became a mount of privilege where Mrs. Bateman held very near and close communion with the Master.

This discipline was not without its results upon her own life. The continual demand upon her unselfishness, the constant setting aside of her own wishes, the patient bearing with fretfulness and childish petulance, developed her character as it might never have been developed under other circumstances. It brought out the full possibilities of a rarely sweet, sympathetic nature, and from the depths of her own experience she could help and comfort others who came to her for help. It was the same process by which in the natural world fruit is brought forth.

When she was younger she had planned out paths of usefulness for herself, and it had seemed not only to herself, but to others, as if she might be an instrument of great usefulness. She was a consecrated

Christian, and longed to use every power of mind and body in the Master's service, and her tact and ability marked her as an efficient leader in every useful enterprise. It had not been an easy thing to lay aside her own plans for usefulness, and it seemed for a time as if she was condemned to uselessness because she could not see any results from her work. It is inspiriting to work when one can see achieved results and accomplished plans, but when day after day passes in a dull routine which never seems to exceed the bounds of a narrow circle, then it requires the highest consecration to believe that God's plans are never mistakes, but are dictated by his infinite love and wisdom. Faith is apt to fail us when sight is obscured, and it is only when we reach some point where we can look back and see the perfect perspective of God's plans that we realize "He doeth all things well." Perhaps one of the hardest things we meet with is limitation in the path of usefulness we have marked out for ourselves, and we cannot see why we should be hindered or perhaps find our progress altogether obstructed. We are working for the Master with hearts full of love to him, and we may feel that his blessing has richly crowned our efforts in the past, when suddenly we find our way hedged in or so thickly beset with thorns and briers that our progress must necessarily be slow and unsatisfactory.

Sometimes we forget that God has placed these limitations about us, and instead of letting them

accomplish their gracious ministration, they embitter us and we rebel against them.

The development of fruit in the natural world teaches us in parable the development of character. An apple, in a morphological point of view, is an arrested branch, a twig, that instead of being extended into additional wood and foliage, becomes an apple. All the sap and substance that would have been contained in the elongated branch are compressed and concentrated. This limitation of the branch produces increased size, a sweetness of taste and a richness of flavor that we could never have found in the leafy twig. Can we not find a lesson in this? When we are arrested in our onward progress shall we wither away in discontent, or shall we fulfil God's purpose by letting our lives round out into increased love and trust?

It is our own fault if we do not profit by the ministrations of limitations. If we grow impatient when our plans are unfulfilled and our hopes are disappointed, and rebel against the restraints which are so hard to bear, then our characters will not mould out into the rounded symmetry which God has purposed. We are defeating his plans, instead of obeying his purposes and glorifying him by increased development, like the unconscious twig, when in his wisdom he sets us about with limitations.

If the arrested twig will not obey its purpose and develop into fruit, it must wither and die; so with the soul life that will not yield to the purpose of

limitation. If Mrs. Bateman had rebelled at the obstacle which had been placed in her path, it would have embittered and warped her whole nature; but after the first disappointment was over she recognized that it was part of God's plan for her life, and so she learned with glad surprise that the ministry of this limitation was a gracious and helpful one. She was only too glad to help Christie carry out any of the plans that she would have gladly made her own, and her cordial sympathy and advice were very helpful to Christie in her inexperience and youth.

It was a great help to her in coming among so many strangers to have such a wise, judicious friend as she found Mrs. Bateman. It helped her in her intercourse with the people to know something of their circumstances, even of their little peculiarities, so that she need not unwittingly wound them by any error of speech.

If Mrs. Bateman had been any other than the true Christian that she was, thoroughly imbued with the charity that believeth all things and hopeth all things, this foreknowledge of the people might have been harmful to Christie rather than helpful. She would have seen with the warped view of another's prejudices, likings and dislikings, and she might have missed much that was beautiful and lovable in others by having her eyes opened to their peculiarities.

Mrs. Bateman was one of those rarely found women who possess the jewel of discretion. She

apparently never saw or heard anything that was unlovely or worthy of blame in others, but seemed to have eyes only for their virtues. If any one told her of another's misdoing, she never commented on the story nor seemed to find any pleasure in it, but spoke of some good trait or some good deed that would counterbalance the less lovely one.

Gossips did not often come to her with any stories, for they felt themselves tacitly rebuked by her silence, and without sympathy no one cares to retail petty stories. This trait in her character compelled involuntary respect, even from those who affected to distrust it.

Mrs. Bush was notoriously given to tale-bearing, and she was universally dreaded as a news-monger, even by those who were always ready to lend a willing ear to her stories.

She was not an untruthful woman, but it was almost impossible to recognize a story after it had left her lips, she had so unconsciously imputed motives as she retailed the facts as they had appeared to her. Without any intention of telling anything but the exact truth, she put her own construction on everything and amplified the proportions of very trifling occurrences, until after a few repetitions the story was magnified out of all relation to the original facts. It nettled her to find that she could never induce Mrs. Bateman to show the least curiosity about any of her news, and if she persisted in repeating it, she would either be gently

checked, or would have to listen in her turn to the recital of some kindly deed of the person she had just been maligning.

To do her justice, she really could not believe in Mrs. Bateman's sincerity. A bit of gossip was such an enjoyable morsel to her that she could not understand why it was not equally delightful to every one else, and she could not be persuaded that Mrs. Bateman did not talk over other people's affairs with her particular friends, even though she would not indulge in gossip with her.

It would have been a revelation to her if she could have understood that Mrs. Bateman was perfectly sincere in her distaste for unfriendly gossip, but she knew nothing by practical experience of the charity that "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

If Christie had seen her new friends through Mrs. Bush's eyes, she would have seen only the oddities, the faults, and the weaknesses of every one, and even if she had striven to resist being influenced by this knowledge, it would have insensibly moulded her opinion. As it was, she knew only the things that made her better prepared to be considerate and helpful, and helped her to discern the really good qualities which were sometimes hidden away beneath an unprepossessing exterior.

In organizing the girls into the circle of King's Daughters it was a great help to her to know something beforehand of their dispositions—which ones

needed to be put forward to realize their own power, and which ones would be more helped by being taught to give others the precedence.

Mrs. Bateman had suggested that she should invite them to the house to organize them, and Christie was very glad to do this, as she knew the meeting would be more informal and social than if she had had to hold it in the church.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ORGANIZING.

THE older girls in the Sunday-school were delighted at receiving little notes of invitation from Christie asking for the pleasure of their society upon the following Friday evening. All the girls whom Christie thought of a suitable age to work together had been invited, regardless of class and position in society, and before they came she realized that it would not be altogether an easy thing to get them to work harmoniously together. As soon as the girls began to arrive on the evening for which they had been invited, they showed a tendency to separate into little sets, and to ignore those whom they were not accustomed to meet elsewhere. It took a good deal of tact, and not a little gentle insistence, to make the party a general one, but Christie succeeded at last. It had been her intention to make the first part of the evening merely an occasion of social intercourse, and when the girls had come more closely together on that ground to speak to them about the work that she had planned out for them.

She carried this plan out, and by the time that the girls had looked at the pretty collection of photographs that had been brought to Christie from a

missionary in Japan, and had played a few games and enjoyed some music, they were all in the most responsive humor that could have been wished, and Christie saw that the time had come to propose her plan.

The girls were delighted at the idea of being organized into a society, but Christie found that the real difficulty in her task lay in convincing them that they could be of any use in the church. The younger element had been entirely overlooked in this church hitherto, and neither they nor those who were bearing the burden and heat of the day seemed to realize how much there was that could be safely left to the young hearts and hands.

The motto which Christie had made her own for so many years, "Doe ye nexte thynge," had opened her eyes to many paths of usefulness which stretched in every direction, not only before her but before others; and she was just the right leader for these young girls, who had never been trained to watch for the little opportunities of usefulness which are scattered through every life. Besides their special service, which was to be helpfulness in the church, she wanted to teach them the beauty of the ministry of little things, for she knew how much might be accomplished thus that would otherwise be left undone.

Their vote was unanimous to make Christie their president, and then the other officers were elected, with considerable discussion. Christie quietly managed the nominations in such a way that representa-

tives from both classes of girls, the richer and the poorer, were nominated, for she was very anxious that neither class should feel left out in this work in which there was so much room for all.

She was very much pleased when the result of the election showed that the four officers who were voted for, namely, two vice-presidents, secretary, and treasurer, were equally divided among the two classes.

Lottie Jones, a bright capable girl, who belonged to one of the most useful and influential families in the church, was elected a vice-president; and Christie felt that she would be a real help to her, for she was a Christian, and in the little intercourse Christie had already had with her she had found out that she showed an earnestness of purpose and a desire to be helpful that augured well for her future usefulness.

Mary Evans, a shy yet bright-looking girl, who worked with a dressmaker, was the other vice-president; and Christie was glad that she had been chosen to fill that position, as she seemed very popular among her friends, notwithstanding her quiet ways, and so by winning her interest the interest of her friends would be aroused also.

Nettie Davis, a merry, impulsive girl of about fifteen, was chosen as secretary, and she was the unanimous choice of both parties, so Christie felt sure that she must possess qualifications for that important office or the girls would not have been so unanimous in their choice. The treasurer was Mary Stewart, a little lame girl, whose affliction, together with her

sweet face and gentle ways, strongly attracted Christie toward her.

They seemed a little dismayed when they found that the first task that had been chosen for them was attendance upon the prayer-meeting, for it was one of the services of the church to which none of them were in the habit of going, and it was evident that their preconceived notions of it were not such as made them at all anxious to become any better acquainted with it.

"I suppose if all the other girls would go too, I would just as lief go every time as not," said Nettie Davis at last. "But indeed, Mrs. Stanley, the meetings are not interesting, or at least they never used to be," she added, correcting herself, lest what she had said might not seem courteous to Mr. Stanley.

"I know they are not interesting," said Christie, much to Nettie's surprise, for she had rather expected a rebuke for speaking as if she considered the meeting dull. "It is because they are not interesting, and Mr. Stanley wants to make them so, that he wants your help."

"Why, I don't see that we would be of any use, except to fill up a few seats," Nettie answered, apparently much surprised at the thought that the girls could add any interest to a prayer-meeting.

"Filling up the seats would be one part of your work, to be sure," assented Christie, "and it would be well worth doing, too, for there is an enthusiasm

in numbers that always arouses interest; but there is more than that for you to do. The singing is very poor, and I want to put that in your hands. Mr. Stanley will give us the hymns beforehand, and if you could come here one evening in the week, or meet at the church, which perhaps would be better" —she corrected herself upon second thoughts, as she remembered that it might not always be convenient for Mrs. Bateman to have such a gathering of girls at her house—"we could practise the hymns and then we would be sure of having good music at all the meetings, which alone would improve them wonderfully. Don't you think you could do that?"

"It isn't worth while to start and keep it up for a few weeks and then drop out one by one, is it, Mrs. Stanley?" asked one of the girls.

"No, indeed," Christie responded promptly. "Whatever we undertake we must pledge ourselves to do regularly and conscientiously, or it would be better not to try to do anything. I don't believe that there will be any danger of your dropping out, however. In the first place, the meetings will be so interesting that I think you will want to come too much ever to stay at home willingly; and beyond that, when you remember that it is service that you have pledged yourselves to do for the King, in His Name, you will feel yourselves upon honor, and would do the veriest drudgery for his sake. You must all promise to attend every meeting unless you are providentially prevented. That means that if

God should put some other work in your hands that you are very sure he wants you to do in place of going to the meeting, you are excused from attendance. Sometimes home duties may keep you from coming. A sick mother who may need your help, or illness that may come to you, will be a good and sufficient reason for staying at home; but I am sure I can trust you to be very careful about judging whether hindrances are really providential or merely imagined. If it is very stormy, you must question yourselves whether you would be able to go to any place of amusement under the same circumstances, or whether it is your usual custom, and one which seems needed for your health, to stay under shelter. If you are not in the habit of staying at home on account of the weather, then you ought to be in your place in the prayer-meeting; but if it should be against your parents' wishes for you to ever expose yourself to the weather, then you can consider that you are providentially detained."

Christie knew that two at least of her girls were in rather delicate health, and that it was necessary for them to be very careful about taking cold or unnecessarily exposing themselves, and she wanted to make it plain to them that it would be right for them to stay at home in stormy weather, since it would only be exposing their health to venture out where they would have to sit with wet skirts through an hour's meeting. She had heard the doctor speak of a severe attack of illness which had been caused by

one of the girls insisting upon going to Sunday-school in a snow storm against her mother's wishes, and so she said more than she would otherwise have done upon the duty of staying at home under some circumstances. It is a duty that seldom needs any dwelling upon, for people are apt to consider a very little storm quite sufficient to keep them at home when the occasion to call them out is a church service.

At their first meeting to practise the music for the next Wednesday evening, she told them that Mr. Stanley intended to have it a service of song; and besides the singing in which they were all to join, she appointed various committees who were to see that hymn-books were distributed in all the seats, that there were to be flowers to decorate the room, and that the room was to be well aired and well lighted. The latter, which properly might have been called the sexton's work, was very poorly done when it was left entirely to the old colored man who took charge of the church building, and a little superintendence from others would ensure a great deal more comfort.

The girls were delighted at the idea of having so great a part of the service put into their hands, and each one resolved to do her share of the work as well as she possibly could, that everything might pass off creditably.

It was a very successful evening. A praise service was something new, and the very announce-

ment of it, in the place of the stereotyped prayer-meeting, aroused a little interest. Of course the girls who were preparing for the evening were interested, and their families as well, and the committee who had charge of the room for the evening worked so hard to make their part of the preparations a success that several more were thus added to the number of those who would surely be there.

When the evening came, the dreary, ill-lighted, and sparsely filled room which was the usual scene was transformed into a cheerful, brightly lighted place, and the enthusiasm of numbers was not lacking to inspire the young pastor.

None of the girls had remarkable voices, nor were any of them trained singers, but they did the best they could, and every one seemed to enjoy the familiar tunes when they were sung with earnestness and some volume of sound.

Altogether Mr. Stanley felt very much encouraged at the interest manifested by all, and he hoped that now they had found out how pleasant a week-day service could be, he would be able to bring them out again. It was the first time that any of the girls had felt as if they were needed in the church, and as one and another spoke of the good music and the pleasure it had been to have such good singing, they resolved that hereafter the singing at the prayer-meetings should always be good.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOME-MAKING.

CHRISTIE had a great many plans for her girls which she was eager to carry out, but she felt that she must defer some of them until she should get into her own house. Delightful as it was to be a member of Mrs. Bateman's pleasant family, yet for many reasons Christie was very impatient to be in her own home. Though her hostess was as cordial and hospitable as it was possible for any one to be, Christie knew that the addition to her family added more care to her already busy life, and so she felt that they ought not to prolong their stay any longer than was necessary.

They could not expect any more comfort, if indeed as much, in housekeeping, with the perplexities that would naturally arise sometimes to embarrass a young housekeeper, yet both Mr. Stanley and Christie had a natural desire to have a home of their own and begin nesting. The great difficulty was in finding a suitable house in which to begin housekeeping. There was not a vacant house in a suitable location when Mr. and Mrs. Stanley first came to Warrensville, and it seemed quite possible that they might have to wait some time before they would have an opportunity to make a home for themselves.

"I have a piece of news for you, Christie," said Mr. Stanley, one day when he came in from a round of calls which he had been making.

"What is it?" asked Christie, looking up from her work.

"There is actually a house to rent in town," he answered.

"Oh, is there really?" exclaimed Christie joyfully. "Oh, Howe, can't we take it right away? Where is it? When could we have it?"

"One question at a time, little woman," answered her husband, laughing at her excitement. "It is too bad to raise your hopes only to dash them to the ground. I am afraid you will think we are as far away from our own home as ever when I tell you where the house is."

"Where is it?" asked Christie.

"It is on the road that leads out to that new factory that is just being finished. I think I pointed it out to you one day. It is a rambling, tumble-down-looking old place, and I am sure when you see it you will be quite willing to stay where we are for a while longer. We certainly could not be any more comfortable in our own home than Mrs. Bateman makes us, but I must confess I am as anxious as you can be to get to housekeeping for ourselves as soon as we can get a house. I know that with all Mrs. Bateman's other cares we must be a considerable trouble, even if she is kind enough to try to make us feel that our society is a pleasure; and I would

like to relieve her of this additional care, as well as to have the pleasure of living in our own home. I am afraid the opportunity has not come yet, however."

"I don't remember the house very well," Christie answered. "If there is time before dinner, couldn't we walk down and look at it now? Perhaps it might do after all."

"I am quite sure that the only way to convince you that it won't do at all is to take you to see it," laughed Howe. "We will go down at once, and then you will feel more contented to stay in these pretty rooms for a while longer. We can stop and get the key on the way, and go through the house, if a glance at the outside isn't enough to entirely disenchant you."

"I don't believe I shall be as easily disenchanted as you fancy," Christie answered, preparing herself for the walk. "I am afraid it would be hard to make Mrs. Bateman believe how much I love her, and how pleasant it is to be with her, if she knew how eager I am to have a home of our own. I can't help hoping that this house will do after all, although you are so prejudiced against it."

It was not a very long walk to the house in question, and in about twenty minutes from the time they left home they had reached it. It certainly was not a very inviting-looking house in which to begin a new home. It was roomy and well built, but it sadly needed a coat of paint, and everything

about the place was in a state of dilapidation. The large garden was much overgrown with weeds, the shrubbery, which at some time must have been very attractive, had grown beyond its bounds without remonstrance, and the hedge of box which defined the edges of the walks had grown tall and straggly. The fence needed paint and occasional palings, and the gates swung by one hinge.

It had evidently been a pleasant and somewhat pretentious house when it was new and had been properly taken care of, and considerable repair would again make it not only habitable but even desirable for a home.

A large bay-window opening down to the floor of the porch which encircled three sides of the house opened delightful possibilities to Christie, and she was not at all dismayed by the external appearance of the house.

"It isn't of any use to go in, is it?" asked Howe, as she handed him the key. "Surely you don't think it is possible for us to live in such an old rookery as this?"

"I haven't come to any impossible obstacle yet," answered Christie. "I would not be at all discouraged by the outside of the house, if it was comfortable within. By next spring we could make a very pretty place of this neglected garden, and things are not really quite as bad as they look. Of course I would rather have a pretty Queen Anne cottage, but if we can't have that perhaps we can make this

house habitable. I warn you I shall not be easily discouraged."

"I can believe that, since you are willing to look at the inside of such a hopeless house," answered Howe, putting the key in the lock and turning it with considerable effort. Evidently the lock was as much out of order as everything else about the building.

It was a very pleasantly arranged house, with a wide hall, and large well-lighted rooms opening on each side.

"Why, if it had been built for us, the rooms could not have been better arranged," exclaimed Christie, delighted with her inspection, as she went from one room to another.

"This large front room would be the parlor, and the one behind it will be such a pleasant study for you. Then across the hall we could use one room for the dining-room, and this one with that lovely bay-window will make the most charming sitting-room."

There were four rooms up-stairs which Christie immediately set apart for their various purposes, and a little room opening from the hall which she declared was just the nook for a little sewing-room.

"Why, it is just as nice as it can be!" she said at last, turning a radiant face toward her husband, who stood watching her with an amused expression on his face. "Don't you think so too?"

"I must confess I don't," he answered. "Just

look at these stained walls and those long festoons of cobwebs!"

"Shut your eyes, and imagine these same walls covered with pretty paper and those cobweb draperies swept down," said Christie. "Can't you just see how different it will be?"

Howe shook his head.

"No, I must confess my imagination will not soar so high," he answered, laughing at Christie's earnestness. "It is time we were going home now, or we shall be late to dinner, so take your last look at the ruins and cobwebs before we leave them."

"Seriously, Christie, what do you think of it?" he asked, as they stood on the porch again and he was locking the door.

"I think it has capabilities," Christie answered brightly. "Really I think that it could be made into a very delightful home, and I am very willing to undertake the task of transformation, if you will only share my belief in its possibilities."

"I thought it would be beyond even your optimism to see any possibility of living here," said Mr. Stanley, as they descended the steps. "I admit that there may be capabilities about it, but I must confess I would gladly exchange them all for a few already developed advantages. I believe you are glad in the depths of your heart that it is just such an old tumble-down place, so that you can enjoy transforming it into something habitable. It isn't at all the sort of home I wanted to take you to, my wife, but if

you are really willing to begin nesting here, of course I shall not object. We will talk to the doctor about it, and see if he thinks it would be worth while to undertake the extensive repairs that would be necessary before the place would be habitable."

"I do so hope he will think as I do about it," Christie answered. "I am so impatient to be in our own home that I admit I may be over-sanguine, but it does seem as if we might really be very comfortable there."

Greatly to Christie's satisfaction, when the subject was broached as the family gathered around the dinner table, both the doctor and his wife were of the opinion that a very comfortable home might be made of the house, though it was sadly in need of repairs.

"I know the owner would be willing to lease it at a very low figure, for the sake of having good tenants in it, as he is living at a considerable distance from Warrensville and cannot look after his property himself. If you took a long lease it would pay you to expend quite a sum in making the needed repairs, and if the place were once put in order, I believe you would be quite as comfortable there as you would be in any of the other houses which might be vacant within the course of the year. There are really no very desirable houses to rent here, and I think if I were in your place and wanted to get to housekeeping, I should rent this house. Not that we want to have you leave us," added the doctor kindly, "but I know

young people cannot feel that they are really beginning their married life until they are living in their own home."

The doctor's opinion decided the matter, and after dinner Christie and Mrs. Bateman walked down to the house again to look at the rooms and see what needed to be done to them to put them in living order. Christie was so delighted at the prospect of beginning housekeeping that she would have been very willing to spend all the afternoon at the house; and when at last she locked the door and returned home with Mrs. Bateman, she could not settle herself to any other employment until she had written a long letter to her mother, telling her of the new plans.

CHAPTER XX.

NESTING.

THE weeks that followed were very busy, delightful ones to Christie. She wondered sometimes if she could really enjoy her new home as much when they should be settled in it as she did in these delightful days of anticipation. There was a great deal to be done before the house would be ready for occupancy, and while the paper-hangers and the painters and carpenters were at work Christie found that she had plenty to do.

Day by day she could watch her plans developing into reality, and by degrees the house which had seemed so uninviting began to take on a very home-like aspect. Mrs. Bateman was always ready with helpful advice, which however she never proffered until Christie asked for it, for she knew that young people like to make their own plans, and even if they sometimes lack the wisdom of experience, they none the less like to try their own way. She entered with the heartiest sympathy into all the plans that Christie delighted in making for her new home, and was always ready to talk about the one subject that occupied most of Christie's thoughts in these days.

Christie found that there was danger that she

would allow herself to become entirely absorbed by the preparations for the house, and she had to watch herself lest she should lose for a time her interest in the other duties she had taken on her shoulders. It was her nature to throw herself heart and soul into anything in which she was interested, and she found that she was often tempted to let her thoughts wander from the preparation of her Sunday-school lesson or her work for the girls, to the all-important subject of her home-making.

In just the measure that she loved to talk over her plans with Mrs. Bateman did Christie shrink from talking to Mrs. Bush, whom she had not yet learned to like.

"So I hear you don't know when you're well off," had been Mrs. Bush's first approach on the subject of housekeeping. "Well, there are not many people in this world that know enough to let well alone. I don't see what on earth you want to make any change for, unless you are getting tired of having Mrs. Bateman preaching at you all the time. I am sure you'll get sick enough of housekeeping before you have been at it very long, and you will wish yourself back to boarding often enough. If you don't, Mr. Stanley will. I don't suppose you even know how to make bread now."

"Oh, yes, I do," Christie answered, trying not to let herself get annoyed by Mrs. Bush's manner. "I understand quite enough about housekeeping to make Mr. Stanley comfortable."

"I suppose you think the congregation will send you in lots of things if you are housekeeping," went on Mrs. Bush. "You are mistaken there though. I know they do it in some places, but they are not that kind of people here. You may as well know that you needn't count on much in that way. I used to live in a place where they always gave the minister a donation every spring and fall. It helped out the salary, for of course he didn't get as much money when he had these donations. He wasn't a pleasant man to give anything to either, for he never acted as if he more than half liked it. When you make any one a present you want to know that he appreciates it, but you never could feel as if he did. His wife did get so put out once at the ladies. She was a dreadful untidy woman, and so one day when we knew she had gone away for the day, some of us went to her house and put her bureau drawers and closets in order for her. They weren't as much out of order as we had thought they must be, but anyhow we spent the afternoon there and straightened everything out real nice. I declare she wouldn't look at one of us the next day in church. One of the neighbors had told her who was at the house, so she knew just who was to blame."

"I don't wonder she was angry," said Christie indignantly. "I should think any one would have been angry at having people go into her house when she was out and look over her bureau drawers. I don't think you would like it, Mrs. Bush."

"Of course I wouldn't," answered Mrs. Bush promptly; "but then you see I am not a minister's wife, and that makes all the difference. A minister's wife belongs to the congregation, and she ought to remember it and not get vexed at every little thing."

"I don't see why you say a minister's wife belongs to the congregation," said Christie, with a little flush in her cheeks. "I certainly do not consider that I belong to the congregation here."

"You'll find out that you do, whether you think so or not," said Mrs. Bush calmly. "A minister's wife ought to be willing to take advice, and let people say things to her without getting put out about it. As I was saying, Mrs. Turner got real angry when we fixed her house up for her, and she didn't use to be altogether pleasant at donations. One time it was funny too, though she didn't see it that way. We gave them a donation, and most every one brought potatoes. It was a good year for potatoes, and they wouldn't fetch hardly anything in the market, so most folks thought that they might as well take a basket along to the donation. Some of the folks gave potatoes and other things as well, but still there were more potatoes than everything else put together two or three times over. I was helping take the things as they were brought, and I declare we didn't know what to do with them all, so we just had them carried down cellar. We filled up the oven with them, and when it came time for the supper we

passed around baked potatoes, for we thought the folks might as well have a taste of their own providing. That's one trouble with donations, people are apt to bring all of a kind. How would you like a donation?"

"Not at all," said Christie, with such promptness that Mrs. Bush laughed.

"Well you won't be likely to get one here, for they don't believe in it, and I must say I don't think it is a very good way myself. Well, I am forgetting to tell you what I came over for. I wanted to say that when you get ready to furnish your house I will go with you and help you pick out your carpets. I'd like to do it, and if you go by yourself you will be likely to get some fancy carpet that won't be of any use when it comes to real hard wear."

"I am very much obliged to you, but my mother is going to help me with my shopping," answered Christie.

"I suppose she's got some judgment then, and won't let you waste your money. I should think she would try to talk you into keeping on boarding a while longer. By the way, there was something else I was going to say, if you will take it the way I mean it, and not get put out at it."

"Of course I won't be offended at anything that is kindly meant," Christie replied.

"Well, you know you will want some plain furniture for up-stairs, and I have a nice walnut bedstead that I haven't used scarcely at all. It has been

standing in a room that I want to use for a sewing-room for ever so long, and it is only in the way there. I was just thinking this morning that it would be ever so nice for you to have, and I should like to have it made some use of instead of just being there where it is only in the way. It's just as good as new as far as its being useful goes, and I said to myself, 'I will just tell Mrs. Stanley she can have it if she wants it.' Now I hope you won't mind my offering it to you."

"You were very kind indeed to think of it," answered Christie, thinking self-reproachfully of her dislike to this woman, who evidently meant to be kind to her even if her manner was disagreeable. She tried to thank her warmly for her kind offer, and she was almost too surprised to speak when Mrs. Bush said complacently,

"I rather thought you would like it. I will call twelve dollars a fair price for it, seeing it cost eighteen when it was new and hasn't been used much."

She evidently did not notice Christie's amazement, and when she had taken her departure, Christie could scarcely wait until the door closed behind her visitor before she burst into a peal of merry laughter which reached Mrs. Bateman's ears.

"I think it was the funniest thing," she exclaimed, as she told Mrs. Bateman about Mrs. Bush's offer. "I supposed of course she was making me a present of the bed; and though I did not want it I determined to accept it, and use it, to show that I appre-

ciated her kindness; and then she calmly informed me that she wanted twelve dollars for it."

It was rather a relief on the whole to discover that she need not feel obliged to take and use the offered bed, which she should have done if it had been a gift as she supposed.

The long list of articles that must be purchased for the house grew daily, and Christie found at last that she must divide it into two columns, one marked "Must have" and the other "Wish to have." There were so many things that she wanted to have to make the house the beautiful, tasteful home that she had in her mind's eye, and she soon found that the gratification of all her desires would have emptied a far deeper purse than hers. Christie was gifted in contrivance however, and when some desired article would be too expensive for her to hope to purchase it, she would plan for something else which should have a similar effect without being so costly.

The work upon the house went on steadily, though all too slowly to suit Christie, but at last it was completed, and the delightful task of purchasing the furniture could be undertaken.

CHAPTER XXI.

BEGINNING HOUSEKEEPING.

MRS. GILBERT and Christie spent a delightful week in the city doing the necessary shopping, joined when possible by Mr. Stanley. For a little while he was quite as enthusiastic as Christie over the task of selection, but before long he was very glad to leave the rest to his wife and go back to his work in Warrensville.

By the time the long list of necessary things had been purchased, and were on their way to the new home, Christie found that there would only be money enough left for a very few of the things on the "luxury list," as she laughingly called it.

"I don't see how I can possibly get along without these things," she said rather dolefully, as she glanced at the long list through which a pencil had been relentlessly drawn.

Her mother smiled at her sober face.

"You will be all the happier because you couldn't get them just now," she said cheerfully.

"Why, mother, how can that be?" asked Christie in surprise.

"You will always have the pleasure of looking forward to making these purchases one at a time as you can afford it, and you will enjoy them a great

deal more in that way than if you could have made your house perfectly complete at once, and had nothing left to add to it. I can give you that little bit of comfort from my own experience. You don't really need these things for your comfort, and you will not find your house bare without them. Don't be unhappy over what you cannot get, but just make up your mind to enjoy what you have."

Christie rolled up the list of impossible things and dropped it bravely into the depths of her shopping bag, where it would be out of sight and out of mind, and gave her attention to the few last things which remained to be done before they should take the afternoon train to Warrensville.

The repairs which had been made had quite transformed the house which had at first presented such a forlorn appearance, and Mrs. Gilbert could hardly realize that it had ever been in the condition which Christie had described to her. The fences and gates had been repaired, the grounds put in good order, and the weather-beaten house had been painted a dark olive with red trimmings, which made it quite unrecognizable.

Within the house the change was no less great. New paint and paper made the walls and woodwork fresh and dainty, and the colors had been carefully selected by Christie after consultation with Mrs. Bateman. It was a pleasant task to arrange the furniture, without any of the haste that is necessary when one has only a limited time in which

to move. It was fully a week before all was in readiness for the wheels of the new machinery to be set in motion, but at last the evening came when the little family sat about their own table for the first meal in their own home.

The delightful novelty of eating a meal in their own home took their appetites away, and when the neat little maiden who had been installed in the kitchen removed the hardly tasted dishes, the husband and wife started off for a tour of inspection over the house with as keen pleasure as if they had never seen an article of the furniture before. It was a pretty, tasteful home, and besides it possessed the charm which would have made the plainest place beautiful in their eyes: it was their first home. Life had never seemed as beautiful and as complete to Christie as it did this evening, and her heart was full of thankfulness to her Heavenly Father who had led her in such pleasant paths.

She wanted to make this home a consecrated one, full of blessing to themselves and to every one who came within its walls; and when later that evening Mrs. Gilbert had retired, and left the husband and wife together, she drew a little foot-stool beside Howe's easy chair and laid her head upon his knee, nestling up beside him for a cosy chat. It was a cool evening toward the last of October, not cold, but just chilly enough to afford an excuse for the luxury of the grate fire which glowed in the open fireplace.

For a time they were content to look into the ruddy coals without breaking the silence, but at last Howe spoke, laying his hand tenderly upon the fair head resting upon his knee.

"We have very much to be thankful for, have we not, darling?"

"Indeed we have," Christie responded earnestly. "Oh, Howe, I have been thinking of so many things this evening. You don't know how much I do want to make of our lovely home. May I tell you some of my thoughts and plans about it?"

"There is nothing that I should like better," Howe answered, and Christie went on:

"Please don't laugh at me or think I am sentimental, though I confess what I am going to say may sound so, but I want our home to be like a strain of beautiful music, without a single jar or discord of any kind. I want it to be so full of love that every one who comes into it even for an hour will feel its influence and be happier for having been here. I mean it to be an inspiration to you in your work, a refuge from everything that is trying and vexatious. Everything that will worry or discourage you shall be left at the door and the home atmosphere will always be cloudless and bright. I am quite sure we shall never quarrel; we love each other too dearly for that; and I do not see why we cannot have an ideal home. If we consecrate our home, I am sure we can make it a blessing to others as well as ourselves."

"That is what I hope it will be, dearest," her hus-

band answered, pressing the hand which nestled in his own. "We will help each other to be all that we should be in our mutual relations to each other, as well as to other people, and with God's blessing resting upon it I am sure we can make our home a centre of influence for good, as I think every home should be. We cannot expect that there will never be any discord in the music, though, darling. We could scarcely hope that two musical instruments could be brought together, and be keyed at the same pitch, without any preliminary tuning. With all our love for each other, I have no doubt but that we shall sometimes find occasion for mutual forbearance before we get thoroughly adjusted to each other. I mean to be the most loving and tender of husbands, and yet with all my good resolutions I am afraid you will sometimes find me inconsiderate or selfish through thoughtlessness. We will never let the rift widen in the lute though, and by and by we shall bring our lives into perfect harmony with each other. You don't know what a help and inspiration it will be to me in my work, dear one, to feel that you are always in sympathy with me, and that you are interested in all my plans for the welfare of the church. It makes my life complete to have you a part of it, and I shall be a better man because of your inspiration. I want to consecrate myself entirely to the work to which I have given my life, and if I can only till ever so small a corner in the Master's vineyard, I shall feel that I am

greatly blessed. You must help me to make the best of myself, Christie; you must help me guard against my faults and weaknesses, and keep me from growing selfish. You must not let your love blind you to my faults, only let it make you patient with them."

"I cannot imagine that I shall ever see a fault in you," said Christie lovingly, pressing her husband's hand close to her cheek. "It is I who am faulty, and will need the patience and forbearance, but even if I do fail ever so often in being the help and comfort that I want to be, it will not be from lack of love; and when you know that, I am sure you will be patient with me. I have such a high ideal for our home and our life together, that I shall always be trying to reach it, and I shall not be willing to stop short of it.

"It is not just for ourselves either that I want to make our home pleasant. I want others to see how attractive a Christian home can be, and how full of beauty if a Christlike spirit is carried into all the intercourse and into the smallest details of daily life. Of course I cannot hope that I shall always do this, but it is what I shall try to remember. In everything that I say and do I want to keep continually before me the thought of the great Example, and try to follow him. I want to keep before me the motto that Aunt Patience gave me so many years ago, and without looking for great opportunities of usefulness just be content to 'Doe ye nexte thynge,' looking

at the very smallest duties which come to me to do as part of God's plan for my life. She gave me my first idea of what a beautiful thing life could be, if one glorified little things by doing them for God. Her words have been a help to me ever since she died, and I know it would be a joy to her, if she could know it, to think that she was helping me in my home-making."

The clock chimed the hour of ten, and Christie looked up in surprise.

"Is it really as late as that!" she exclaimed. "Why, I thought the evening was but just begun. I do not know where the time has gone."

A little later Christie's head was resting on her pillow and she was lost in a restful, dreamless sleep, while her husband, to whom sleep did not come as readily, lay beside her, watching with a glad sense of possession the sweet face upon which the quiet moonlight rested, thanking God for the gift of such a true and loving wife, who would be truly a help-meet to him and an inspiration and help both in his life and his work.

CHAPTER XXII.

QUESTIONS.

It would have been hard to find a happier or more contented "mistress of the manse" than Christie. It was a delight to her to guide the affairs of her home, and see that the domestic machinery ran smoothly without friction. She was by no means one of those helpless girls whose education has been so one-sided that it is easier for them to solve a problem in Euclid than to master the simplest of the culinary mysteries pertaining to a well-cooked dinner.

From her earliest childhood it had been a pleasure to her to assist her mother in her household cares, and little by little she had learned the duties of a housekeeper, until she was not only a good cook, but a wise and provident little housekeeper, who knew how to direct the work which she could have done herself had necessity required it. Her husband's love would never be tested by poorly cooked food nor mismanagement of his resources, and there was no fear that she would ever become lost in one of those hopeless mazes of perplexity which are so apt to overtake young housekeepers.

It rather amused her sometimes to listen to the well meant advice which some people thought it nec-

essary to offer her, evidently pre-supposing that she knew absolutely nothing of the simplest details of housekeeping. It was quite a surprise to them when they found out that she was by no means as ignorant as they had imagined. It was not very long before she found out for herself the truth of her mother's words, that she would be glad that she had not been able to gratify all her wishes concerning the appointments of the house at first, for it was such a keen delight to her when one at a time she was able to add these additional articles.

A wide couch for the sitting-room had been one of the luxuries that she had relinquished with more reluctance than anything else. "It doesn't seem so much like a luxury as a real necessity," she had said, as she hesitated, pencil in hand, before she marked it off the list. "It would be so comfortable to have in the sitting-room for Howe to rest on when he comes in tired out from his long walks, and I could curl up on it in the evenings when I am waiting for him to come in. I suppose we could spare it better than some other things though, like a table or chairs for instance. It will be the very first thing that I shall save up to get after we begin to keep house."

It was one of the most costly as well as one of the most wished for articles, and Christie was delighted when one day a plan flashed into her busy brain by which she was sure with her husband's help she could convert a set of springs that had belonged to a narrow bedstead into one of the desired couches.

Howe was quite expert in the use of carpenter's tools, and he made a low pine box into which the springs were fitted, and then Christie undertook to make a pretty covering for her improvised couch by decorating some plain material which combined the double advantages of being durable and inexpensive.

Her fingers were busy over her pleasant task one morning when she heard a footstep on the porch, and a moment later the bell rang with a decisive peal.

"Is Mrs. Stanley in?" she heard a voice ask as the maid opened the door, and when Nora answered in the affirmative and asked the guest to walk into the parlor, Christie prepared to lay aside her work and entertain her caller.

"I'll just walk in where she is," she heard the stranger say, and pushing open the door of the sitting-room, where she evidently knew she would find Christie, she entered unannounced.

"I knew you would be busy of course at this hour in the morning, as all housekeepers are," she said, as Christie rose to greet her. "So I wouldn't let your girl interrupt you, but thought I would just come in and make myself at home. I have come on a little matter of church business, and I can talk just as well while you are at work."

Christie flushed a little as she resumed her employment. Her visitor was Miss Elliot, one of the pillars in the church, "a rough-hewn pillar" as Chris-

tie laughingly called her when she was telling her husband of her first meeting with her. She was goodness personified, and could always be depended upon to do her full share in all the work of the church, and winter's storms and summer's heat were never sufficient to prevent her from occupying her place at every meeting both on Sundays and week-days. Twice it was said that she had faced a storm which kept every one else, except the pastor, at home by its fury, and people would have been scarcely less surprised to see one of the front doors missing from its place than to see Miss Elliot's place vacant. She was a remarkably vigorous, well preserved woman for her sixty years, and rarely was subject to any ailment; so she could not understand how illness could prevent others from doing all that she did.

"It all depends upon a person's will," she would say rebukingly, when any one complained of being obliged to leave a duty undone because of illness. "If people are willing to give up and go to bed on every little excuse, they will always find plenty of chances; but if they mean that nothing shall stand in the way of their doing their duty, the flesh won't be quite so weak. I haven't any patience with these people who are always complaining and ailing. If they would keep their minds on what they had to do, they wouldn't have so much time for grumbling."

It was certain that Miss Elliot always kept her duty before her, and never suffered herself to relax the least in any of the many duties she had taken

upon her shoulders. In season and out of season she was diligent in attending to her own tasks, as well as in exhorting others to do what she thought was their duty.

"Particularly out of season," Christie had remarked, after she had overheard her lecturing Mrs. Wyatt—who had a pair of twins and a delicate mother—for not coming out more regularly to the prayer-meetings. "Indeed my heart is always with you all at the prayer-meetings, I hope, but I think my little ones are my first duty, and I must stay with them in the evenings, unless mother is feeling particularly strong," Mrs. Wyatt had explained.

"If your heart was right, you would not be willing to let your children come between you and your religion," said Miss Elliot, shaking her head gravely. "My mother had seven small children, and no one to leave them with, and she had to walk five miles to church; but she never let a Sunday pass without being in her place at the sanctuary."

"I should like to know how she managed it," exclaimed Mrs. Wyatt, and Christie listened for the answer.

"She locked the children up in the house, leaving them something to eat, and then went to church."

"Left them all alone!" cried Mrs. Wyatt in surprise.

"Yes, she knew she was in the path of duty, and that the Lord would take care of her children. When she got to the top of the hill she would al-

ways kneel down and pray that the children might be kept safe till she should return, and then she put them out of her thoughts and went on her way with an easy mind. She had the right kind of faith, and wasn't afraid to trust the Lord. There is an example for you."

"Well, I suppose she was doing what she thought was her duty," said Mrs. Wyatt, with a little sigh. "I am afraid my faith will never be as robust as that; and besides, I am doing what I believe to be my duty when I take care of my children."

"I hope your eyes will be opened, and you will be led to see that your place is at church when the Lord's people assemble themselves together," said Miss Elliot, as she turned away to labor with some one else who she thought was in need of exhortation.

If to her zeal and consecration she had added tact and charity, her character would have been most beautiful; but the absence of these two qualities made it so warped and unsymmetrical that oftentimes when she meant to do good she did positive harm.

"She can talk more people out of the church than any preacher can talk into it," Mrs. Bush said one day, when she had put Miss Elliot to rout, after a conversation upon religious subjects that that lady had tried to hold with her. Shocked as Miss Elliot would have been if she had heard Mrs. Bush's words, there was nevertheless quite a good deal of truth in the remark. Even the members of the church,

those who loved and respected the real goodness in Miss Elliot's character, often found their patience sorely tried by her bluntness of speech and her proneness to judge for others concerning matters which they could best settle for themselves.

Those who were not Christians had no patience at all with what they called her interference in other people's affairs, and they blamed her religion for her lack of tact and harshness of speech, instead of considering that these were her personal characteristics, which would have been equally strong if she had not been a Christian. It was not strange that people generally resented her exhortations, for she did not try to make the religion which she professed appear gentle and winning, but made it seem unlovely and hard by her presentation of it. Christie was quite sure that she would rebuke her for spending her time upon work which she knew would seem perfectly useless to Miss Elliot, and she was not mistaken.

Miss Elliot's gray eyes rested upon the work in Christie's fingers in silent disapproval for a few moments, and then she spoke.

"Is it possible, Mrs. Stanley, that you can think it right to sit here at eleven o'clock in the morning doing such work as that?"

"I am not neglecting anything else," Christie explained. "I have done all that I had to do about the house, and made all my preparations for dinner, so I feel perfectly at liberty to spend the rest of the morning in this way; and it is a piece of work I am

very impatient to finish, so I want to spend every spare moment upon it."

"I do not see how a Christian can ever feel that she has time to waste upon anything as useless as fancy work," Miss Elliot said reprovingly. "When there is so much to do, and so few workers, I cannot understand how any one who has given herself to the Lord can feel that she has a right to waste any of her time. It is something that we shall have to give account for just as much as any other possession, and we have no right to spend it in idleness or unprofitable work. I feel that I ought to speak very plainly to you, Mrs. Stanley, for you are the minister's wife, and there are a great many who will take you for an example; and if you lead them astray it will be a heavy responsibility to bear. If we Christians set a better example to the world, and came out wholly from among them as we are bidden to do, we should have more influence over the ungodly. It is because they see us still conformed to the world, and trying to please ourselves, that they doubt our sincerity. The salvation of immortal souls ought to be the chief object and aim of our lives, and if those who have no concern for their own future welfare see us absorbed in foolish fancy work when we ought to be doing the Lord's work, how can we expect them to believe that we are in earnest in our Christian profession?"

Christie felt abashed by this reproof, and she wished with all her heart that Howe might hear the

conversation from his study and come to her rescue. She was not gifted in argument, and she knew that although she might explain to Miss Elliot why she believed it to be perfectly right to spend part of her time, when her other duties had been done, in making her home as beautiful as possible, she would not be able to justify herself in that lady's eyes.

"I don't feel as if I was wasting my time, though," she said, trying to explain matters as well as she could. "It seems perfectly right to me, when I have attended to all my duties, to spend any spare time I have in making my home beautiful and attractive. I do not feel that fancy work is wrong except when it interferes with other duties, and I don't think that my example in this particular will injure any one else. If I left everything else undone for the purpose of indulging my fondness for such things, I could see how it would be wrong, but really, Miss Elliot, I think I can conscientiously use my leisure time in this way."

"Mrs. Stanley, a Christian consecrates time, money, and talents to God, I believe?"

"Yes," Christie answered.

"Then I don't see how you can reconcile your conscience to using those three things which you have consecrated to God's use in making something for no purpose in the world except to look pretty. It seems to me positively sinful."

"I can't argue very well," Christie replied. "But I want to tell you as well as I can how it looks to me.

I think that there is a use in the world for merely pretty things just as well as for practical things. God has made so many beautiful things everywhere, and given us a capacity for their enjoyment, so I think he must mean us to admire all that is beautiful. When he has made things with beauty of form and color, like flowers for instance, without any other use except to be beautiful, I think that gives the seal of his approval to beauty, and shows that he means beautiful things to be a part of our lives. I think pretty things can be consecrated to God, and do just as much for him as the necessary things of life."

Miss Elliot shook her head.

"You don't take the right view of it at all, Mrs. Stanley," she said. "I am afraid you are trying to justify yourself in being worldly and fond of the things of this present life. Don't you think that there ought to be a very marked difference between Christians and the world?"

"I certainly do," Christie responded. "But I think one difference should be this: Christians should be brighter and more sunshiny and winsome than other people. They should be so attractive in their manner and conversation that people will feel drawn to the religion that they profess. A gloomy, censorious Christian ought to be an impossible thing, when we live in the sunshine of God's love."

Miss Elliot looked rather shocked.

"You had better talk to your husband about these things," she said gravely. "I am sure he will tell you that there should be no levity in a Christian's walk and conversation. They should not be given to dress either," she added, looking meaningly at the folds of Christie's pretty morning-gown.

"No, I agree with you that dress should not be given a place of too much importance," Christie answered. "But I think it is every one's duty to look as well as possible. One does not need to be slovenly and dressed in ill-fitting clothes to love God. I believe that one can do more service for him by being as attractive as possible in person than by giving occasion to remark by a disregard for dress. We are the temples of God, and it is surely fitting that we should make those temples worthy of his indwelling. It is not honoring him to neglect ourselves."

Miss Elliot was silent for a few moments. She had always prided herself upon her disregard of her appearance, and it was a new thought to her that it might be a Christian's duty to be neat and attractive. She was not prepared to admit the truth of Christie's arguments however, and she thought best to change the subject.

"Well, I am not explaining my errand here this morning, Mrs. Stanley," she said. "I thought all the work for our missionary box was about done, but I had some sent back to me unfinished this morning. Mrs. Fox wrote me that she was sick and couldn't finish it, so I came to see if you could not

do it. I suppose you will be willing to do so, as you have nothing more important than this fancy work on hand."

"I shall be very glad to help with it," Christie responded, laying aside her needle.

The work proved to be some gingham aprons, and Christie promised to complete them by the next afternoon, so that they would be ready for the packing of the box the day after.

Miss Elliot's heart softened a little toward Christie before she left, and when she reached the door after declining a cordial invitation to stay to dinner, she said,

"I believe you are a Christian and mean to do right, Mrs. Stanley, only I don't think you have quite the right view of things. One of us must be wrong, when we are both Christians and look at things from such a different standpoint."

Christie was glad to hear these last words, for she respected Miss Elliot for her goodness and she was afraid that she must appear in her eyes very far from being a follower of Christ when she held such different views from Miss Elliot and believed in so many things which she evidently regarded as inconsistent with a Christian life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

UNFULFILLED PLANS.

"I BELIEVE I have a plan for every hour of this day," Christie remarked one morning at the breakfast table. "I do hope I shall not be interrupted, for my plans are so particularly useful that I should like to carry them out."

"I should like to know what some of these great plans are," said her husband with a smile, as he passed his cup to be refilled with coffee.

"Well, my morning plan is to go up to the almshouse and take one of the poor old women there some flannel that I have for her. The last time I was there she told me that she had a misery in her back all the time, because her flannels were not thick enough; and then I am going to stay a little while and read to her. I did not tell her I meant to come to-day for fear something might happen and I should have to disappoint her; but I know I shall be a welcome visitor, even if I am unexpected. That will take most of the morning, and this afternoon I want to call on five of my Sunday scholars, and then go to the missionary meeting. I shall get home just in time for tea, so don't you think that I have quite a full day planned out? Oh, I forgot, I must send a letter to mother this morning before I start out."

"You certainly have plenty of employment planned out," Mr. Stanley replied. "I wish you had a better day for your walk to the almshouse, for it is bleak and cold and I think a storm is threatening."

"I don't mind storms," Christie answered. "When I am prepared for bad weather I rather enjoy being out in the wind and snow or rain. I think my old woman will be all the more glad to see me if it is stormy, for she says it's 'very lonely-like' when the weather is bad and there are no visitors."

As soon as the morning meal was concluded, and Christie had given her directions for the day to Nora, she hastened up-stairs to write her letter to her mother so that she could have it ready to send in the eleven o'clock mail. She had finished it, and was wrapping herself up for her intended walk, when there was a ring at the door and Nora came up with the intelligence,

"There's some one down-stairs that wants to see you, Mrs. Stanley."

"Who is it?" Christie asked, trying to keep a look of annoyance out of her face as she took her hat off and laid it aside.

"It's no one that lives here," Nora answered. "Indeed, I'm thinking that it's an agent," she added with a wise look. "Shan't I tell her you were just going out, and she must come again?"

"No, I will go down and see her," Christie said. "You may take this letter over to the postoffice for me, Nora, for I am afraid I may not get out in time

to post it myself, as it may not be an agent, but some one who has come to make a call."

Nora was right in her surmise, however, as it proved, for when Christie went down into the parlor she found a woman waiting to see her who began at once to expatiate upon the merits of a book she was trying to sell by subscription. It was not a book that would be of any use either to Christie or her husband, and it was moreover an expensive book, that she could not afford to buy, or she might have taken it without wanting it, the woman's eagerness to sell was so great. Christie declined giving her her name as a subscriber, and intimated that she had an engagement, but still the woman persisted in showing her the book and trying to induce her to change her mind.

Christie was annoyed by her persistence, and was about to rise and tell her that she really must excuse her, as she had no more time to waste, when the pitifully eager expression on the woman's face touched her. She looked sick and tired, and there was a hopelessness about her that went to Christie's heart. She was not sufficiently wrapped up for the cold December morning, and though she had been in the warm parlor some time there was a pinched, blue look still about her hands and features.

A thought came into Christie's mind that changed the whole nature of her feelings toward the woman. She had planned out the day for herself, she had intended to consecrate it moment by moment to

God's service, and the plans that she had made were all such as she had thought would be particularly acceptable to him. This interruption had chafed and fretted her, and she was about to let this unwelcome visitor see her annoyance. Yet was not this happening, as she had thought it, part of God's plan for her day? Perhaps he had sent this woman to her for some message of comfort or helpfulness, and she would be disappointing him if she let her go away without it. If she could serve him better in this way that he had planned, was she not willing to lay aside the plans she had made for herself and do what he wanted her to?

A kindlier feeling toward the woman came into her heart as she looked upon her as some one sent to her for some purpose, and although she could not help her with money, yet she determined that as far as kindness and sympathy could go she should not go away empty handed. She must meet with many rebuffs; and perhaps a little sympathy, the kindliness one sister might show to another, would be worth as much as pecuniary help to her.

"I must tell you once for all that I cannot take the book," she said very decidedly but pleasantly. "Won't you draw your chair over by the fire and get thoroughly warmed before you go out again, for it is quite bleak this morning and perhaps you have had a long walk."

She drew a low rocker before the blazing grate fire, and laying aside the book which the woman had

placed in her lap, she made her take the comfortable seat and enjoy the warmth. Christie's keen eyes noticed that her shoes were worn and looked as if she had been walking for a long distance, and that she shivered a little even as the heat from the coals fell upon her.

A hospitable thought occurred to her, and she excused herself for a moment and left the room. A cup of coffee had been put aside from the morning meal, Christie purposing to refresh herself with it when she should return from her long cold walk from the almshouse. While she was warming it she put a couple of muffins in the oven, and in a very little while she went back to the parlor with a tray in her hand.

Her footstep was so light that she entered the room unheeded, but paused for a moment upon the threshold. Her visitor had leaned back in her chair, with her hands clasped over her face in an attitude of despair, her whole manner so full of distress that Christie's heart ached for her. She shrank from letting the woman know that she had seen her trouble, and retracing her steps shut the dining-room door behind her loudly enough to intimate her approach.

When she entered the parlor her visitor was looking into the fire, and was evidently making an effort to control her distress.

"Won't you have this cup of coffee?" said Christie kindly, drawing up a light table and placing the tray upon it by the side of her guest.

"Thank you, you are very kind," the woman answered, her voice almost harsh with the effort she made to keep it from trembling; and then her self-control suddenly forsook her, and bowing her head upon her hands she burst into a passion of tears that almost alarmed Christie.

"I am so sorry for your trouble," said Christie gently, laying her hand on the woman's shoulder, wishing she knew some way to comfort her.

For a few moments the poor woman seemed to find it impossible to check her sobs, and then she looked up.

"Please excuse me," she said in broken tones. "I am sorry to have behaved this way. I do not know what you must think of me; but if you only knew what trouble I am in, and how little kindness I have met with, you would know—" and the tears choked her voice again.

"Please drink this coffee while it is hot," Christie said, "and then if I could help you any, if you would care to tell me about it, I should be very glad to listen."

The hot drink brought a little glow of color into the pale face, and the woman ate and drank with a relish that confirmed Christie in her suspicion that she had not had any morning meal.

When the lunch was eaten and she had declined anything more, she seemed very willing to reward Christie's kindness by her confidence.

"I must ask you again to excuse me for having

acted as I have this morning," she began, "but I was so completely discouraged that I entirely lost heart. This has been such a hard business for me, and I have been very unsuccessful in it. My husband has been sick ever since last spring, and he is just getting well enough not to need my care all the time, but he will not be able to do any more work for two or three months yet. We have been running so behindhand and getting in debt that we both got quite disheartened, and I determined to see if there was not something that I could do to earn some money. I tried one thing after another, but I couldn't get anything to do At first I hoped that I might get some copying to do, for then I could do it at home and not be away from my husband so much. But that was impossible, and then I looked for a chance to do plain sewing. No one seemed to want any done, and then I was so desperate that I tried to get washing and ironing or even house-cleaning to do. It was only now and then that I got a day's work, and we kept getting further and further behind all the time, and I knew I must do something or we must starve. I tried to get a place as book-keeper, for that was what I did before I was married, and I always made good wages at it; but that was harder to get than anything else. Some one told me how much money book agents made, and so I thought I would try it, but I haven't sold a single book, and I have been trying for five days now. It is the hardest work in the world, I think, for no one ever wants to see a

book agent, and I have been treated so rudely in some places where I have been that I have got so that I hate to go into a house. I can only bring myself to ring the bell by thinking of my husband, and how much we need the money, so that he will not have to go back to work before he is quite strong and well. I do not know why I have not succeeded. I thought perhaps it was because I did not urge the people enough, and so I kept on trying to get you to buy one even after I knew you did not want one. I thought if you did not get one I might as well give up, for I had failed so often that it would be of no use to try any more. Please excuse me for having insisted so; it was because I felt so desperate at the thought of failing again. I was tired and cold and hungry too, and your kindness upset me altogether, it was so different from the way I have been treated everywhere else. I walked all the way here from Parkville, where we live, and there was so little in the house this morning that I left it all for my husband, for I thought surely I would manage to sell at least one book to-day, and then I would get something to eat and ride home this evening after I had canvassed the town. I suppose I should have succeeded better if I had taken a cheaper book, but this is the one I was advised to take, and I knew nothing about it. I may as well give up canvassing, for I know I shall not succeed, and it is so hard to know that one is always unwelcome. If I could only get something else to do, I should be more

thankful than I can tell, for I must earn some money somehow."

"Let me take your shawl and hat, and while you rest yourself perhaps we can think of some plan," Christie said, her heart overflowing with thankfulness that she had not been allowed to turn away this stranger who so sorely needed help and sympathy. What were the plans she had made that they could not be willingly set aside while she tried to cheer as best she might this discouraged heart? It was very evident that Christie's kindly interest was comforting in itself, but she wanted to be of some real practical assistance, though she found it hard to think of any way in which Mrs. Rowan could earn the money she so greatly needed.

They were talking together when Christie heard her husband's footstep on the porch, and she went to meet him, closing the door behind her, that she might tell him about their visitor.

"I am so sorry for her," she concluded. "And I do feel so helpless with all my sympathy for her, for she says it is hard to get a chance to work even when one is willing to do anything, no matter how unpleasant. She does not look strong enough for hard work, though she thinks she could do it, and it would be nice if we could find her some place where she could do writing, for she used to be a bookkeeper, she says, so she could do anything of that kind well, I suppose."

Mr. Stanley looked thoughtful for a few moments.

"I know they want more help at the factory," he said presently. "I heard the foreman trying to engage two girls where I was calling this morning. Perhaps there would be something that she could get to do there. I will give her a note to Mr. Taylor and ask him to do the best he can for her. She might go and see about it now, and then come back here to dinner so that we could know how she succeeds. If she gets a place, the pay is good, and she could afford to take her car fare out of it every day, for it is only five miles to Parkville and the fare is not much; or perhaps she and her husband could come here to live. It would be worth while for her to try there at any rate, and see what she could do."

While Mr. Stanley went into his study to write the note, Christie told Mrs. Rowan about her husband's suggestion and found her very willing to adopt it. She promised to return and let them know about it, and started off with a bright face very different from the hopeless expression she had worn when she came to the house. While she was gone Christie looked up a warm coat of her own which she had laid aside to give away, and a pair of shoes which were better than those Mrs. Rowan had worn, resolving to give them to her if she could do so without hurting her feelings.

It was an hour and a half before Mrs. Rowan returned, but Christie, who had been watching for her from the window, knew as soon as she caught sight of her that she had been successful, for the

discouraged droop had gone out of her figure and a bright look illumined her pale face.

"I have work!" she cried joyously, as Christie opened the door for her. "I had to wait some time to see the foreman, but he engaged me at once. It is such pleasant work too, for it is keeping accounts in the office; and I shall get better pay for that than if I had to do piece work in the factory. I find I can get two rooms here just as cheap as I can in Parkville, and we can move here and live. I shall make enough to keep us and pay something on our debts every week."

"I am so glad," Christie exclaimed cordially, for she had been greatly interested in the woman's trouble, and had hoped with all her heart that she might find a way out of it.

When dinner was over Christie offered her the garments she had put aside for her, and found that she was very grateful for them. From her tenth-box she took out a sum small in itself, but sufficient to be a great help to any one who was penniless, and gave it to her to use in going home and in getting her things moved over to Warrensville, so that she might go to work as soon as possible.

It was still early in the day, and Mrs. Rowan seemed to think that if she was successful in engaging two suitable rooms at once, she could go home and pack up and have everything in readiness to move the following morning.

"There are a great many little things about the

house that my husband feels strong enough to do," she said, "and so if I once get the things here, I need not take any time from the factory to settle, but with what my husband can do in the daytime and I can do evenings, we will soon get to rights."

"I wish I could thank you as I want to," she said, when she bade Christie good-bye. "You don't know what an angel of mercy you have been to us. I was in despair. It seemed as if God had forgotten all about us, and that we had no friends anywhere who cared what became of us. I was completely discouraged, and it did seem as if we should have to starve in spite of all my efforts to get work. If you could only know just how wretched I was, you would understand better how very, very good both you and your husband have been to me. I can never thank you enough."

"I don't want you to thank me," Christie said. "I feel very glad that you should have been sent to me for the help that some one was meant to give you this morning. It has been a happiness to me to be able to do something for you, and it is a privilege to have been the instrument of our Father's care for you. I am so glad that you have good news to carry home. Good-bye. Let us hear how you get along."

As Christie ran up to her room and donned the wraps she had laid aside so unwillingly that morning, when her plans for the day had been set aside so reluctantly, she was glad in the very depths of her heart that she had not turned aside from the plan

that God had made for her to carry out. Her plan for the morning had been unfulfilled, it is true, but was it not happily postponed by Providence, that she might be the bearer of comfort and encouragement to a discouraged sister?

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE GOLD DOLLAR.

SOME of her plans for the day had to be given up, as it was so late before she had undertaken to carry them out, and she decided that the calls upon her Sunday scholars could be better left until the next day than her call at the almshouse. Of course the missionary meeting could not be postponed.

Old Polly Matthews, the pensioner at the almshouse to whom Christie had intended to take the warm flannels had not forgotten either that this was the day for the missionary meeting, although Christie did not know that she knew or indeed cared anything about their meetings. She knew indeed that she was an earnest Christian, and her faith and earnest piety were so marked that Christie always felt as if she had been the one benefitted whenever she visited the patient, cheery old woman; but there were so many earnest Christians in the church who could not be persuaded to take any active part in the missionary work of the church, and who could scarcely be persuaded to occasionally contribute something toward its support, that it was not strange that she had not expected to find an earnest member of the society in the almshouse.

It was the meeting at which the annual dues of each member were to be paid, and this was the first time in all the years in which old Polly Matthews had been a member of the society that she had not had her dollar to contribute. It had been a gift that cost self-denial and saving from one end of the year to the other; but it was always ready, and given with such joy in the gift that it seemed as if it must be worth a dozen of the reluctant contributions which had to be asked for so many times and which were given so grudgingly.

To-day cheery Aunt Polly, as she was familiarly called in the almshouse, was so quiet, and had such a sad look upon her usually sunny face, that the matron more than once asked her if she was sick.

"No, thank you, dearie, I'm not sick," she would answer gently, grateful for the little attention, but the shadow rested upon her face nevertheless.

The "misery in her back" of which she sometimes complained was never severe enough to cloud the sunshine of her face, and it was an unusual thing for her to be so depressed. She had borne a good deal of misfortune without murmuring. Twenty years ago it seemed as if she had every prospect of having a comfortable home to call her own until she should be called away to the mansions above of which she loved to talk and think. The cosy farm-house was their own, unencumbered with debt or mortgage; her husband was a hale, hearty man who it was reasonable to think would live as long as his

less robust wife ; and there were two sons just growing into manhood upon whom the old couple could lean in their declining years.

Trouble had come very gradually to the happy home that had been bright with the sunshine of prosperity for so long. Adam Matthews, the husband, who had never known a serious pain or ache in all his life, began to limp and complain of rheumatism in his limbs. It was so common a complaint among his neighbors that no heed was paid to it, and beyond a rubbing with some old housewife's liniment he did nothing for it, until he realized that he was growing so stiff that he could scarcely drag himself about. It was of little use for the doctor to do all that he could, for by degrees the stiffness and numbness that had begun in his limbs crept up along his right side, and at the last the terrible truth came to him that he need never hope to be better. Creeping paralysis, certain as death itself, was taking hold upon its victim, and a life of lingering helplessness till death should relieve him was all that he could look forward to.

While the little family were trying to adjust themselves to this terrible sorrow, another blow came to them which seemed even heavier at first because of its suddenness. The oldest son was brought home to them dead, killed by an accident in the harvest-field. The machine which he had been guiding had passed over him, when he fell from the seat, and the

first grief he had ever caused his mother was when she looked upon his lifeless form.

Sorrow brooded over the little house with folded wings after that.

The mother had to learn that there is something harder than to lose a son by death. It was harder to see their only remaining child turn from the paths in which he had been brought up and go astray. Neither a father's pleadings nor a mother's tears availed to turn him from the course of sin he had chosen. He forged a note, and to save him from the consequences of his sin, by making good the amount he had stolen, the little home had to be mortgaged. The old father's mind had become too clouded by this time to realize that this meant that his wife would be left in her old age without a home and dependent upon the care of her thankless son, and he slipped away into the shadow of death unconscious that a darker shadow was to fall upon her.

There was no one to pay the interest upon the mortgage, and although she might have stayed in her little home without molestation as long as she lived, yet her honesty was too great to allow her to stay when she felt that it would only be upon tolerance, and that she had no right to the roof-tree she had saved and toiled so hard to buy. She was all alone without any one to care for her, for nothing had been heard from her son since he had been bought off from his scrape, and she herself said, with a patient gentleness that was more touching than a loud outcry

would have been, that the almshouse was the only home left to her.

She had a certain pride of her own that was sorely wounded at the thought that now in her old age she would have to become a pauper, but she reasoned truly that it was no worse than it would be to stay in her old home upon sufferance and be supported by her neighbors, and so she bade farewell with a heart that well-nigh broke to the old home nest and came up to the almshouse.

She never complained, and she was so grateful for every kindness shown her that the matron, who was often sorely tried by the querulousness and impatience of the others, declared that she was worth her weight in gold for the sunshine she made by her cheery face and pleasant smile.

To-day it seemed as if she had never so keenly realized her poverty and helplessness as she did when she could not give the little sum which she had never before had to refuse. She was poor indeed if she could do nothing for the Master's work, when she loved him so much and would gladly have given all she had to his cause. Her prayers seemed so little that she did not realize that they were a rich gift which her church could ill spare.

Her heart ached with homesickness for the old home and the old days, when she had comparative comfort and never need deprive herself of the luxury of giving. She crept up-stairs at length to her little room, and opening the chest which contained

all her worldly goods, she took out a little box that held her treasures. Such pitiful little treasures they were! A ringlet of yellow hair, that had been cut from her oldest boy's head when he had put on pants and left babyhood behind him with his discarded skirts and his curls. A lock of soft dark baby hair that had grown on Willie's head, the boy over whom his mother's heart still yearned in spite of his waywardness. Some grey hair that she had cut from her husband's head when he lay in his coffin; a pair of little socks, a rattle, and the little gold dollar with a hole in it through which a blue ribbon had been passed. Very faded and soiled the blue ribbon was now, for it had been worn so many years ago upon her oldest boy's neck, when he was a dimpled crowing baby. She had always treasured it, and it had become all the more precious since he had died.

She touched it to her lips as she sat there with it in her hand. It was a little bit of the happy past which had once been her lot, and the dim blue eyes filled with tears as she held it tenderly in her hands. She had been so rich then with home and husband and babies, and now she was so poor that she could not even give a dollar to the missionary society.

All at once she became conscious that she was holding a dollar in her hand. She had been accustomed to think of it only as a keepsake, and it had not occurred to her before that it was really a dollar and one that she might give if she wished. She held it more closely as the thought came to her.

Why, it would be just as easy to give one of those shining tresses of hair as to part with that little gold dollar! It was precious to her far beyond its intrinsic value, and for a little while she felt as if she could not bear to part with it under any circumstances.

She kept it in her hand as she crept slowly downstairs and back to her chair. It was all she had to give. Should she give it? It was harder than she would have believed it could be to part with anything for the Master's sake, and she reproached herself for selfishness as she realized how her heart clung to this her treasured little coin. Perhaps she would not have an opportunity to give it. It might be that no one would come for it, and she would be forgotten and passed over. To be sure she could give it afterwards, but that would not be the same thing.

While she was thinking this she saw Christie on her way up the hill, and she knew that this excuse would not hold good. The minister's wife was coming and she had not been forgotten. She must decide at once whether she was going to hold back this one thing that she could give to the Lord!

Perhaps some other mother who handles with reverent touch little remembrances of a lost baby can sympathize with her clinging to the little coin. It was not until the door had opened and Christie had come in, her face glowing with the wind and her

struggle against it as she climbed the hill, that Aunt Polly had decided.

"I am glad you didn't forget me," she said, holding out the little dollar with its pathetic bit of ribbon that told the story of its preciousness. "I was worrying because I hadn't been able to save up any money this year. It's the first year that I haven't had a cent I could call my own, and so of course I couldn't save any. I only just took it in that this was a dollar. I had been keeping it because it was Abner's when he was a baby, and he's dead now; but I want to give it to the Lord, though I ain't fit to give it as long as I grudged it at first."

Christie looked bewildered. She could not imagine what the poor old woman was talking about. Her errand had been to bring her something, and she did not know what she meant the dollar for. She had not been put in Mrs. Brown's place as collector for the missionary society, and she would not have thought of coming to an inmate of the almshouse for contributions in any case.

Aunt Polly saw that she was not making herself understood, and she explained.

Tears came to Christie's eyes as she touched the little coin. What self-denial some gifts could cost! Her first impulse was to put the gold dollar back into the withered old hand, and tell her not to part with anything she held so dear, and she would give her another dollar to give. She checked herself in this impulse, however. It was not for her to deprive the

old woman of the joy of self-sacrifice, though Christie determined that it should only be for a time. She knew of a use to which she could put the little dollar that would make it do more for the work to which it had been given than it could do just by its own intrinsic value, and yet bring it back to the mother again.

She stayed as long as she could at the almshouse, and made Aunt Polly happy by the gift of the warm flannels she had brought her. It was almost time for the missionary meeting when she said good-bye at last and went away with the precious little coin safely tucked away in a corner of her pocket-book. This was the second time that she had been brought into close contact with royal givers to a cause which some esteem lightly in spite of all pleadings for it, and she felt as if it had been a great honor. She ranked this gift of the little gold dollar beside the mittens that Miss Judy made with so much labor that she might have a share in the coming of Christ's kingdom. It had been one of her first pleasures after she had reached her new home to send to the cheerless little Virginia cabin a box containing several articles that she knew would add to Aunt Judy's comfort, and every week she dispatched to her the religious paper that she had not already promised to send to some one else, knowing that it would create new interests in the life which seemed so barren of all pleasures.

There was a better attendance than usual at the

missionary meeting, although the weather was so inclement. When all the other business of the meeting had been transacted and the treasurer had read her report, Christie produced the little gold coin and told its story. Every one present knew Mrs. Matthews well, and they were deeply touched at the thought of the gift which had cost so much.

"Can't we buy it back, and make it a present to her?" asked Christie.

The suggestion was immediately adopted, and one and another gave what they had to spare, perhaps giving more than they would have thought they could have spared if they had not known the price of this gift from the almshouse. Some who had only brought their own yearly due told the treasurer what they were willing to give, and when all had contributed the treasurer announced that four dollars and thirty cents had been given to purchase the little coin, and that it was the wish of the society that it should be sent to Mrs. Matthews as a little token of the esteem and love in which they held such a faithful member of their society.

To Christie the delightful task was allotted of carrying the precious little token back to the donor, and when she saw the tears of delight which the old woman shed over her recovered treasure she had a better idea than ever before what the gift must have cost her.

CHAPTER XXV.

A CONSECRATED HOME.

"A PENNY for your thoughts, Christie!"

Christie looked up with a smile as she heard her husband's question.

"They are not worth very much," she replied. "I was just thinking that after all my good resolutions I have been very selfish with my home. I thought I should make many other people happy with it; and I do not know that I have carried out my intention at all."

"You have made me very happy in it," said Mr. Stanley. "Does that count for anything, or don't you think I am sufficiently miserable to be made happy? I think I have claims upon your consideration, for if it were not for this pleasant home and my dear little wife, I would be just as homeless and miserable as you could wish. Don't think that our home has been a failure just because I have been the only one made happy in it."

Christie laughed.

"Of course your happiness comes first of all the world to me," she said. "I should think I had failed indeed if I had not made you comfortable and happy, but I don't want to stop there. I want to do ever

so much more. Will you listen while I read something to you which I just came across in an old magazine in my desk? It is not very long, and I remember laying it aside when we were first engaged, because it gave me an idea of what a home might be in the way of helpfulness to others besides ourselves."

"Read away," answered Mr. Stanley. "If I go to sleep it will be because I have been lulled to rest by the music of your voice."

"I shall wake you up at once if I see any symptoms of drowsiness," Christie answered laughingly. "I really want you to listen to this though, Howe, for I have a plan to suggest to you after you hear it. The article is called 'Consecrated Homes,' and the writer says: 'I do not mean merely Christian homes, but those homes which have literally been consecrated to the Master's service. There are so many ways in which a home with its dainty appointments can be used in the cause we love and long to advance! In Sabbath-school work especially we are thrown in contact with many who are homeless although not houseless. Young men and boys who are away from the comforts and wholesome restraints of home life, and are earning their living among strangers, cannot find a home, although they may obtain food and shelter within the walls of a cheap, over-crowded boarding-house. Perhaps you may in some measure feel yourself responsible for their spiritual welfare as their Sunday-school teacher or their

pastor's wife. In a brief hour on Sunday afternoon, or by a hand-clasp and kindly inquiry, you may do somewhat to throw about them the strong silken chains of influence; but if you want them to realize that you are in earnest in your efforts to win them to Christ, and that you bear them in your heart during the week, you must do more than this. Open your home to them and make them welcome guests. You cannot fully realize what a bright spot in their lives you can make by inviting them to take tea with you and spend the evening.

"'The charmed influence of a Christian home will linger about them after they have gone back to their lodgings, and it will insensibly elevate their ideal of a home and make their ambition purer and higher. Do not put away the dainty bits of bric-a-brac and the best china, for the boys will appreciate these just as thoroughly as more critical guests, and though they will not express their admiration in words, you will arouse their beauty-loving instinct and gratify it. Treat them as gentlemen, and the chivalry which is latent in every boy will struggle into expression, uncouth perhaps at first and lacking the polish of refinement, but well worth developing. Take it for granted that each boy means to develop all that is best and noblest in himself, and is going to make the best of himself, and you will find that the boy will try to deserve your estimate.

"'The invitation, the cordial welcome, the circle about the daintily-served table, with its delicate

china and bits of bright color, the carefully prepared dishes, appetizing and savory, the pleasant evening afterward, and the informal worship which seems but a natural acknowledgment of mercies, these make the links in a chain that hold the boy away from evil companions and degraded surroundings; and some time when you may never suspect it the remembrance of the beauty and peace of your Christian home may outrival the unholy glitter of one of those palaces that stand at the entrance of the broad way that leads to destruction, to lure young men through their dazzling portals. The evening spent in a home will be an oasis of refreshment in the dreary monotony of a hard-working life, and the boy will not doubt that he has a place in your heart and your prayers when you have made him a guest in your home. Do you say that your carpets are too delicate, your china too costly, to use for such guests? that they might injure the expensive furniture or break some precious ornament? Then, dear friend, if your home is too beautiful to consecrate to the service of the Saviour who bought you with his blood, I fear you have made a mistake. Have less of luxury, less of beauty, if need be, but let your home be consecrated to active service.

"'There are young girls too whose lives you might brighten by an occasional invitation, and while they spend a time of social intercourse with you you can learn more of their special needs and weaknesses than in many an hour of the more formal intercourse

of the Sunday-school. Then you can tell how best to reach their hearts and lift them to a better womanhood, and by your human love you can more surely lead them to the divine love.

"'If you once determine to use your home for the Master you will find no lack of opportunity, and after you experience the joy of making a quiet, lonely life happier and brighter, you will never regret your experiment. Of course there are sometimes instances where it becomes a duty to set aside any cherished plan of this kind, when the Master asks us to serve him in another way; but where the home can be consecrated to his service a very important factor of usefulness is withheld if it is not gladly offered.

"'If God has blessed us with beautiful homes, bright with the sunshine of love, with his benediction resting upon them, is not this all the more a reason why we should share our happiness with less favored ones? Is it not the least return we can make for his love and bounty to make them consecrated homes, consecrated willingly and gladly to his service?'"

Christie laid the magazine aside when she finished reading and turned to her husband.

"Well, my dear?" he asked inquiringly.

"Well, I want to put these practical hints into practice, if you are willing. I have thought of so many ways in which we could let others share the happiness that we find in our home, and I want to talk them over with you. If you like the idea, I

think it would be nice to have your young men's Bible-class meet here once a month and spend the evening socially. They are most of them boys who have very few home pleasures; in fact I think half of them are just boarding here in Warrensville in one of those crowded factory boarding-houses, and I know for the little money they pay that they cannot have many comforts. I think an evening spent here, if we did our best to make them enjoy it, would be something bright for them to look forward to from one month to the next. They are just of an age when they are not often asked as guests into pleasant homes, and the only places where they are made to feel that they are wanted are the pool-rooms and the street corners. I know this would be only one evening in the month, but it would be better than nothing, and the influence would extend beyond the time that they are actually here. What do you think of this plan, Howe?"

"I think it is a most excellent plan, dear," Mr. Stanley replied, "if it is not making too much work for you. I have felt for some time that I must get closer to my boys than I can in church or the Sunday-school, for they seem to be under the impression that a minister is an uncanny sort of person, and never was a boy; consequently they do not believe that he knows anything about a boy's temptations or wishes. I can't get close enough to them to do them the good that I want to, and I am sure that meeting them socially, and when I do not have to preach at

them, will help me to get at them better than any amount of time I may spend with them in their class. Of course it will be hard work until the boys get somewhat acquainted with us, for I suppose they will be so shy at first that they will be pretty hard to entertain. It will be work that will pay, however."

"Then that idea may be marked 'approved,' and laid aside for use," said Christie. "Now for my next idea. This is very much in the same line, only it will devolve more upon me to carry it out. Have you ever noticed how many girls go past here from the factory every night and turn down that little street in which Mrs. Rowan lives? I was asking her about them a few days ago, and she says they are all strangers here in Warrensville and came here to get work in the factory in answer to an advertisement. They are crowded together in those boarding-houses that always seem to me the very perfection of discomfort, and sometimes three or four of them share the same room. They have not anything to do in the evenings but walk around the streets or sit in their stuffy rooms, and my heart just aches for them. On Sundays she says she has tried to get some of them to come to church with her; but they say it is their one day to have a good time, so they go off on little excursions, or back to their homes, when they do not live too far off, as most of them do however. I want to give those girls a little glimpse of home sunshine too, somehow. I know they are not pleasant girls:

they are noisy and loud in their manner, and I believe they put every cent they earn on their showy dresses and cheap jewelry. I am ashamed to say I have been feeling as if they were hardly worth doing anything for; but after all it is not their fault when they never have a chance for anything better. I have been wondering if I could not do something to give them an idea of a higher pleasure than they know anything about. They are not making the best of themselves, and I don't believe they have any idea how to do it. My plan is very vague as yet, but it is something like this: I want to ask them, a few at a time, to spend the evening with me, and show them that I feel interested in them and want to be their friend; and then I want to arouse their ambition to improve themselves in some way. I know a good deal about them from Mrs. Rowan, and she says that all their reading is of a trashy kind, and they do very little even of that. I have a half-formed scheme in my head that I am afraid will seem rather Utopian at first, but I do hope I shall be able to see my way to make it practicable."

"What is it?" asked her husband, as she paused, fairly out of breath with her long speech.

"I am in hopes that a good circulating library, unpretentious of course, but composed of books worth reading, can be started, and so the girls can have some helpful literature instead of the miserable trash they are reading. I know it would mean lots of work for somebody, but I believe it could be done

I am sure there are at least a hundred people here in Warrensville who would be willing to contribute a book to such a library, and a hundred volumes would be a very good nucleus. If we could find a place to keep it where the girls could have access to it twice a week, they could take the books home to read. It would be better yet if we could have a pleasant room where they could go and read if they wanted to spend a quiet evening, but I suppose that would be hoping for too much. If I can just begin with having them here for an evening, perhaps the 'nexte thynge' may lead into wider paths. May I ask them to come, Howe?"

"I am afraid you will overdo your strength, dearest," her husband answered. "I will help you carry out any plans you are interested in with all my heart, but I do not want you to plan more than your strength will enable you to accomplish without overdoing. Can you take on this in addition to all your other cares?"

"Oh, yes," Christie answered. "It will not be work, but a real pleasure to me, to be able to do something for them, Howe. If you only knew how I appreciate my happy life, with all its blessings, my home and my precious husband, you would understand how I long to pass some of my happiness on to those who have not so much to make them happy. It will not be work, but a privilege and a pleasure. Indeed I am sure that I shall not be undertaking more than I can accomplish. My own girlhood has

been so sheltered and guarded that I feel as if the least return that I can make to show my gratitude is to put some brightness into these hard-working lives which have so little of real girl happiness in them. I do want our little home to be the centre of ever widening circles of influence for good, and I am sure that it can be if we only try to make it so."

"We will consecrate it anew to the Master's service, dear one, and we will do all we can to let the sunshine of our home atmosphere brighten other lives," said Mr. Stanley, putting his arm tenderly about his wife and drawing her to his side. As they knelt together in the family worship which was so dear to them both, when they carried all the joys and cares of their united life to the throne of grace, these new plans for helpfulness were laid before the Lord with the petition that he would accept them, and guide them by his wisdom so that they might advance the interests of his kingdom.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SUCCESSES.

THE many plans which Mr. Stanley and his wife had made to increase interest in the weekly services proved successful, and they felt well repaid for the labor which it cost to put them into execution. No thought of failure in anything that they undertook together ever entered their heads, for they had not yet been disheartened by the failure of any of their theories. Theories in themselves are such beautiful creations, so symmetrical in their proportions, so perfectly adjusted to every possible need, that it seems a pity that they must ever be shattered and wrecked by rude collisions with stubborn facts that will not resolve themselves into the conditions which are necessary to success. These two young people had not learned that theories, like crystals, are rarely without flaws, and must be often subjected to modifications before they can be put into practice; so they rejoiced in the prospective success of the plans which they laid together after much consultation, and no shadow of a possible failure ever darkened their horizon.

The Wednesday evening service which had formerly been so lifeless could hardly have been recog-

nized now. The singing was always good, thanks to the regular attendance of the young girls who had pledged themselves to take charge of the music, and Mr. Stanley enjoyed a greater freedom of speech when he had a good audience to address. That he succeeded in interesting the people was evinced by the remark a man made who had never been known to attend a prayer-meeting before this pastorate, and who had come simply to hear the singing, in which his daughter had a share.

"I'm coming again to hear that young man talk. I believe I like it better than preaching, for it seems to me more sociable like and interesting."

"It was a success to-night, Christie," Mr. Stanley said as they walked homeward together the evening after the first praise-service. "But can I bring them out again? I think I will make the committee on floral decorations a standing one. The ladies enjoyed their work, and it certainly added a great deal to every one's enjoyment. I want to plan a good programme for next Wednesday night. If I only could depend upon some help besides Mr. Griswold's long prayers, and Mr. Harper's, which are good, only very much the same always. I really believe Mr. Griswold feels it to be his duty to do his share toward filling up the allotted hour by as long a prayer as possible, and though I have several times hinted to him that a shorter prayer would be more edifying, he pays no attention to me. Last week when I had monopolized the hour myself as much as possible, I

asked him to lead in a short closing prayer, but it was just as long as usual. That long prayer which is inevitable does a good deal to destroy the interest of the meetings. If I only could get some one else to take part; but Mr. Griswold and Mr. Harper have been the only ones who have been accustomed to for so long that I am afraid it will be some time before I can depend upon others. I believe I will try a promise-meeting next week if I can get enough people to volunteer to take part."

"If you could only keep up the interest till attendance becomes a matter of habit with them, I am sure you could easily sustain it," his wife answered, feeling as if the care of all the churches rested upon her shoulders, for was she not her husband's chief adviser and privy counsellor?

After much solicitation Mr. Stanley found twenty-five who were willing to pledge themselves to take part in the meeting by reading aloud a favorite promise from the Bible. Thus another meeting was scored as a success. The next meeting, though simply a prayer-meeting, was better attended than usual, and the following was again a monthly concert of prayer for missions. Somewhat to the young pastor's surprise, he found it was a much harder task to induce the men to take part than their wives, and it was only after much urging that he persuaded three men to furnish items of interest concerning the missionary country under consideration.

The meetings were not always successes, but the

certainty of good music and an interesting address from the pastor at last secured a pretty good attendance as a regular thing, and Mr. Stanley exerted his ingenuity to vary the exercises as much as possible every evening and keep out of the ruts. It cost hard work, but the young pastor was too much in earnest in his task of building up the church to care how much he spent himself upon its interests. The infusion of young life was beginning to make itself felt in the church, and even those who had hitherto opposed letting the young people have any of the responsibility, now admitted that their help could hardly be dispensed with and that it had certainly been a valuable addition.

Christie worked hard over her infant-class. As any one knows who has ever undertaken this charge, it requires continual effort and careful preparation to make the lessons interesting to the little ones, and the ingenuity of the teacher must often be taxed to the utmost to present the truths which are to be taught in such a simple way that the childish minds will grasp them.

It was a class which well repaid her for her efforts however. She loved them, and they returned her love abundantly, looking forward to the hour for the lesson with the joyous certainty that their teacher loved them and wanted to see them, and that they were not, as the poor children had learned to feel with the succession of preceding teachers, a troublesome charge which no one wanted to assume. They

never had time to become restless and troublesome, for before they had time to weary of one exercise another had taken its place, and rising to sing the sweet childish hymns which Christie taught them kept them from becoming tired of one position.

She visited them in their homes, and she found that through the little ones she had an easy passport to the hearts of their mothers. It was such a new thing for any one to take special pains to interest the infant-class that it was all the more appreciated. It was a labor of love with Christie, for little children had always been fascinating to her, and she loved to listen to their sayings; but to be always prepared with the lesson often cost considerable self-denial.

Miss Nelson was utterly amazed, one Tuesday morning when she called upon Christie, to find her with a notebook beside her and the Sunday-school lesson lying before her, while she was studying an outline picture that she thought she could use for the blackboard on the following Sunday.

"Why, what are you doing?" inquired Miss Nelson in surprise. "It looks as if you were studying your Sunday-school lesson, but you surely can't be doing that on Tuesday morning."

"I am, though," Christie returned, smiling at her astonishment. "I begin Sunday afternoon, after Sunday-school, by reading over the lesson for the next week, and then I try to take half an hour every day to go over the lesson, and I make notes of all that I come across during the day that I think will

help interest the children in the lesson or make it plain to them."

"Is it possible!" Miss Nelson exclaimed. "Why, I never heard of any one spending so much time on a Sunday-school lesson. I don't believe more than half of the teachers look the lesson over at all before they come to the school, and I am sure they never really study it. I don't see any use in it, for all there is to do is to ask the questions, and any one who can read can do that without studying the lesson beforehand. The children don't pay much attention anyhow, so there isn't any use in trying to explain the hard parts to them. Of course it would help to fill up the time, there would be that advantage in it. I declare I don't know what to do with all the time. I get all through with the lesson, and then I just let the girls sit and talk to each other, as long as they don't make any noise, until the superintendent rings the bell."

"I wish there was more time," Christie answered. "I have so much that I want to say to my little ones to make the lesson helpful to them all through the week, that I should be glad to have half an hour more. Surely, Miss Nelson, you don't mean that you think that a teacher has nothing more to do than to ask the questions on the lesson leaf? Don't you feel that you have any farther responsibility toward your scholars than to teach them the bare facts of the lesson?"

"To be perfectly honest with you, Mrs. Stanley,"

Miss Nelson replied, "I must confess I don't feel any responsibility about my class beyond making them behave themselves. If you can talk me into feeling that there is anything more than that, I am perfectly ready to be convinced. Please lecture me just as much as you want to, for I see I have shocked you, and I promise you that I will take it all in good part, and improve by it if possible. Where should you say my responsibility toward my class began?"

"Please don't think that I am trying to lecture you," said Christie, "but I will tell you just what the responsibility of a teacher seems to me. I should say that it began with regular attendance and unfailing punctuality, and beyond that in a very careful preparation of the lesson, gathering all that you can from every source to make the bare facts interesting, bringing illustrations, pictures, and stories to help make things plainer to the children, and trying to explain everything that may be at all difficult for their comprehension. You would be surprised to find how interesting the lesson could be made if you once prepared it carefully and kept it in your thoughts all the week."

"Well, I should call that a great deal of responsibility," laughed Miss Nelson. "If I had to study a lesson that way, I would feel as if I had a mountain on my shoulders."

"That is only the beginning of the responsibility," Christie continued. "These children in our classes have immortal souls, and these souls are to be our

care. Of course the Sunday-school ought to be only supplementary to home training and teaching, but I have in my class, and I have no doubt that you have in yours, children who never receive any religious instruction anywhere else. In this one hour then we have to sow the seed that will have to spring up among all the weeds that have the rest of the week to grow in undisturbed. It seems perfectly hopeless to me sometimes when I think what abundant opportunities there are during all the rest of the time to undo the little good I may accomplish on Sunday, but then I remember the promise that God's word shall not return unto him void, and so I do the best I can and trust the results with him."

A thoughtful expression took the place of the smile on Miss Nelson's face as she listened to Christie's earnest words.

"You make a dreadfully solemn thing of it," she said. "I don't believe I ever think about my class having souls. With some of them I am so conscious all the time of their ill-dressed, uncared-for little bodies that I am glad to get away from them as soon as I can."

"If you think of each one as a precious soul, you will forget everything that is not pleasant in their personal appearance," Christie answered. "If you feel as if you could not be content until each one of them is a Christian, you won't be able to help loving them, even if there is nothing pretty about them. I should add to a teacher's responsibility that of pray-

ing for her class every day by name, and sometimes praying with them, so that they will realize how much in earnest you are."

"You seem to take it for granted that a teacher must be necessarily a member of the church," said Miss Nelson.

"I do not see how any one could teach others about something that she knew nothing about herself," Christie answered. "Surely any one who would be willing to take anything as precious as souls under her care must have higher strength than her own to depend upon. One could not teach others of Christ's love if one had not learned by personal experience the heights and depths of it. If a teacher was not a Christian when she took the class, I think that the knowledge that she had these little ones depending upon her would make her feel her need of Christ, and she would go to him for help to bring her class to him."

"If every one felt as you do about it, there would not be so many teachers, but those who had classes would do more good," said Miss Nelson. "I have been a Sunday-school teacher the last six years, and I know ever so many more teachers, and I am sure none of them make as serious a matter of it as you do. I do not mean that you are not right. If one realizes that the children have souls, why of course it isn't a light matter to teach them, especially when, as you say, sometimes they don't get any home teaching; but I don't think most people feel that way

about it. I know my Sunday-school teacher didn't, for I was in her class for years, and she never did very much more than I do for my class. She was pleasant and we all liked her, but she never tried to teach us very much. The only thing she ever said to me was that I was getting old enough to think about uniting with the church. I did not feel like it, and so I didn't, and I never have, but she never seemed to think that it was any of her business. You have made me feel so uncomfortable about having my class when I am not a member of the church that I believe I will give it up. I am not worse than plenty of other teachers, but I don't want to have a class and not do as I ought to do by it."

"There is a better way than giving up your class," said Christie gently.

"What is it?" asked Miss Nelson.

"Don't you think it would be better to go to the Saviour yourself, and then you could show your little ones the way."

Miss Nelson shook her head.

"I don't know," she answered. "I will think about it. If it is any satisfaction to you to know that you have made me very uncomfortable, Mrs. Stanley, you may as well know it."

She did not speak irritably, although her words might have sounded as if she had taken offence at Christie's words if it had not been for her subdued manner and the tone of her voice, which was sad rather than angry.

Christie's Home-Making. Page 246.

"Will it sound very unkind if I say that I am glad you are uncomfortable, if only you may find real and lasting comfort when you do find peace? I think the kindest thing I could wish for you, dear, would be that you might feel how much is lacking in your life, so that you could not rest until you found the love that is so precious to those who have tested it."

"You are different from any one I know, and things seem different to you of course, but I am not sure whether I want to feel as you do or not," Miss Nelson answered. "It seems to me as if living would be such a perfect slavery if you had to make a duty of everything and never please yourself. Doesn't it worry you when you take things so seriously for fear you may not be doing just right all the time? I don't see how you can take any comfort in life."

"I suppose I can hardly make you understand just how it seems to me, any more than I could tell you how beautiful the world was if you had always been blind; but so far from feeling as you imagine I must, it is the most comforting, restful feeling to know that everything that comes to me is part of God's plan for my life. I know and feel that not even the smallest thing can happen to me without his knowledge; and if I do each duty as it comes to me I am carrying out his plan for my life, and it is a far more beautiful pattern than anything that I could design. I don't mean that I am always contented.

Sometimes I want to be among those who do great things and accomplish great results, and it is hard to be contented with little things; but when I think about it I am willing and glad to do what is planned for me, and then I have the comfort of knowing that I have nothing to do with the results. Those are in God's hands."

"Do you really feel as if every little thing was specially ordered?" asked Miss Nelson. "I know people profess that they do, but I never believed it. I will believe you if you tell me that you do though. For instance, to take just a little thing, do you suppose my coming here this morning was anything more than an accident or happening?"

"I fully believe that it was part of the plan both for your life and mine," answered Christie. "It may be that I was meant to bring you a message from the Saviour of the peace and love he is waiting to offer you, and perhaps you were sent here on purpose to hear it. I do not think that this talk was in either of our plans for this morning. It certainly was not in mine, for I did not know that you were coming until you entered the house, and then I did not guide the conversation. It shaped itself, or rather I should say that it was guided into the channel that it has taken."

"I did not plan coming either," Miss Nelson said. "I was passing and so I just thought I would run in. I am like every one else, I have fallen in love with you, Mrs. Stanley, and I like to be with you. I

only intended a little chat on general subjects when I came in, and I have never talked with any one in my life about the things we have been talking about. It frightens me though to think of its having been planned for me."

"Don't feel that way about it," Christie answered. "Think that it is love that has guided you even when you knew and cared nothing about it, and don't refuse it. If for just one moment you could know what peace and happiness there is in being a Christian, I know that you would not be willing to wait another day, nor another hour even, without going to the Saviour. It is such a sweet, real thing to me that I cannot help wanting to share it with every one else that I care about."

"I promise you that I will think about what you have been saying," Miss Nelson answered. "If you were old and solemn and didn't think about anything else but religion, I should not feel as if it was anything that I need worry about for a good while yet, though of course I always meant to be a church member before I died; but you are only my age, or even younger, and you are full of fun, and have as good times as any one else; and so when you talk this way it seems as if it was something that I ought to be interested in too. Good-bye. Thank you."

"Good-bye. I shall think of you very often to-day," Christie responded. "And I shall pray for you too, that you may not put this matter aside until you have settled it in a way that will make you

happier all the rest of your life. Even if you were sure of having abundant opportunity to attend to it by and by, it is too much blessedness to defer. When you have once experienced it for yourself, you will find out that I have not been able to tell you half how sweet it is to be a Christian."

Many a time during the day Christie's thoughts followed her visitor, and she prayed very earnestly that the Master would let her weak human words, spoken for him, lead this soul to him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A COMMENCEMENT.

THROUGH Mrs. Rowan, Christie could get a very good idea of the needs of the factory hands. Some of the operatives were young men and women whose homes were in Warrensville, and who at the end of the day's work washed away the traces of toil from their faces and hands and left all thoughts of the factory behind them when they returned to their homes, which, though plain, were still comfortable and inviting.

These were in the minority however, for by far the larger class were strangers in Warrensville who had come to that place merely to get work, and who looked for the cheapest possible boarding-place. There were several boarding-houses kept for the accommodation of the factory hands, and as the one object of the proprietors was to make as much money as possible from their boarders, it can be imagined that comfort was not much considered. The rooms were small and close and as many as could be induced to room together were crowded into each apartment. The meals were poorly cooked, with no attempt to make them appear inviting by careful serving. It was no wonder that the streets in Warrens-

ville were full of the factory hands in the evening, for until they were ready to go to sleep there was no other place for them. They had none of the comforts or protection of home life however humble, and the more Christie heard about them from Mrs. Rowan, the more she longed to help them.

With Christie to will was to do, unless some insuperable obstacle interposed, and she set about carrying out her plans at once. It was a hard matter to arouse any sympathy or interest for them in the hearts of other people, for they were a very unwelcome part of the population of Warrensville. The establishment of the factory had been very much opposed in the first place by the people, and when it was argued that the new industry would afford employment to the young people of the place and thus keep them from going away from home to look for work, they answered that it would also bring a very undesirable class there in search of work, and so the benefit their own people might derive from the factory would more than be made up for by the annoyance of having a low class of people brought into the town. It had certainly been anything but an advantage to the place, and the factory hands were soon aware of the disfavor with which they were regarded. In return they did all they could to deserve the bad reputation with which they were credited, and by lounging on the corners and loud laughing and talking on the streets they managed to make themselves very disagreeable.

Only a very few ever attended the church services, and Sunday with most of them was a day for sleeping and lounging or going on some excursion. There was plenty of room for missionary work among them, but it never seemed to occur to any one to undertake it. It was not an inviting field, and the mutual feeling of dislike between the townspeople and the factory hands made it very unlikely that any one would attempt to improve their condition, or that they would receive any advances amicably.

The employes who were residents of Warrensville held themselves aloof from the others, whom they regarded as beneath them, so the one channel of communication would be Mrs. Rowan, who seemed to belong to both classes, since she was a stranger in Warrensville, and yet had identified herself with the church, so that she was received among the better class of workers. It had been something that she had said that first aroused Christie's sympathies for the girls in the factory. She had been to see Christie early in the evening, and was just taking her leave at the gate when a group of the girls passed, showily dressed and talking and laughing noisily. They nodded familiarly to Mrs. Rowan and stared half-defiantly at Christie.

"They seem like a rough set, I know," Mrs. Rowan said apologetically, "and I dare say they are, but the poor things have no idea of any better times than to walk about the streets and dress themselves up,

and though at first I felt as if I could never have anything to say to them, yet I am really getting to like some of them as I know them better and see how good-hearted they are under all their rough ways. That tall one, with the red waist and the feathers in her hat, is just as kind and good as any one could be to any of the others when they are sick or in any trouble. One of the girls has been sick for a couple of weeks, and Nellie Lewis has been sitting up every other night with her, and she suggested to some of the other girls that they should each do a little on Sadie's work every day, and then add it all up and let her get the pay for it, so she wouldn't get discouraged at being sick and earning nothing. The girls all do just as she wants them to and she is the leader among them. If she only had had chances I think she would have been a real bright girl. She is that any way, but what I mean is that she would have done well at her books. She never had any chances though, except what she has made for herself, for she told me she has had to look out for herself ever since she was eight years old; and I think she has been a pretty smart girl to make a home for herself all that time, even if it has only been in one of those boarding-houses that to my thinking aren't fit to live in, they are so crowded and dirty. I pity a girl that has never had any better home than that. Poor things, that's all the most of them have though."

After Mrs. Rowan had gone Christie thought over

her words, and felt more kindly toward the girls whom she had disliked for their bold manners and flaunting dress. When the plan for helping them entered her head, she forgot all that had annoyed her in their dress and behavior, in her pity for them, and she determined that they should at least have a glimpse into real home life.

It was not very easy to arrange the first invitation, for there were so many that it would be impossible to ask all at once, and she did not know just how to divide the invitations. She spoke to Mrs. Rowan about it and asked her advice.

Mrs. Rowan pondered for a few moments.

"I know what I think would be the very best way, if you wouldn't mind," she said.

"What is that?" Christie asked.

"If you should send for Nellie Lewis, and talk to her about it, and tell her that you want to give the girls a nice time, and ask her which would be good ones to invite together, I know she would feel flattered, and would do her best to help you both about inviting the girls and making them behave themselves when they come. They all do just as Nellie says," Mrs. Rowan answered. "She's got the notion, and I suppose it's a true enough one, that people don't like the factory hands, and she feels sort of proud about it, and wants to show that she can get along without any favors from them. I think it would do her good to have a little talk with you first, and understand that you really feel kindly toward them.

Please don't get out of patience with her, Mrs. Stanley, if she is a little independent at first, for indeed when you get to know her better you will find that there is some good in her."

"I think it would be a very good idea to have a talk with her," Christie responded. "Will you ask her to call and see me to-morrow evening, Mrs. Rowan? I promise you I won't lose my patience even if she tries it, which I do not think she will do, for I am too anxious to help her to be easily discouraged."

Mrs. Rowan promised to deliver her message, and the next day at lunch time she went to Nellie and told her that Mrs. Stanley wanted to see her that evening.

"She does, does she?" returned Nellie, nibbling at a pickle with which she was alternating bites of cake. "Well, you can give her my compliments and tell her I walk past her house every evening, and if she chooses to watch for me she can see me any time she wants to, but that she must look sharp, for she won't see me any other way."

"Oh, Nellie!" exclaimed Mrs. Rowan in dismay. "Don't act that way. Do go and see her, and I am sure you will like her, for she is just as lovely as she can be."

"I don't doubt it," answered Nellie coolly, "but I am not perfectly lovely, you see, and so we won't agree."

"Please go, Nellie, just for my sake!" urged Mrs.

Rowan. "I told her you were just the one to talk over something she wants to do, and it will make me feel dreadfully if you don't go after my saying that. I will do the next thing you want me to do, if you do this for me."

"You won't be put to that trouble," Nellie answered. "I am not going, so there!"

Mrs. Rowan pleaded in vain, for Nellie was in one of her most contrary moods, and enjoyed refusing the invitation. She had not quite decided that she would not go, but she thought, "I will tell her I won't go, anyway, and then I can change my mind if I want to this evening."

She was unusually tired that evening, for she had been up with her sick friend all the night before, and the loss of rest after her hard day's work had made her unfit to begin another day's duties.

"I declare I am almost tired enough to go to bed now," she thought to herself as she went up to the room which she shared with two other girls, after she had risen from her scarcely tasted dinner. "I must have a little walk first though, and it will freshen me up a bit maybe."

It was with a gratified feeling that she reflected that she had an invitation for the evening which she could accept if she wanted to, and though she had quite resolved by this time that she would not go, yet she dressed herself with a little more care than was usual when she only contemplated a walk. She held her head a little higher than usual as she walked

past the house to which she had been invited, and studiously looked the other way to show her complete indifference, for she had no doubt but that Mrs. Stanley was watching her.

She thought it was quite possible that she might hear her call after her, and she was prepared for that, but she was not at all prepared for what really did happen.

Half a block farther some one came around the corner so suddenly that before either could move out of the way Mrs. Stanley and Nellie had come into collision.

"Oh, I am so glad to have met you," Christie exclaimed cordially. "You must have thought me very rude to be out when I asked you to call, but I really couldn't help it. I went to see a little sick boy in my Sunday-school class, and he went to sleep with his head in my lap; and as it was the first sleep he had had all day, I couldn't bear to move and disturb him, so I waited till he woke up, hoping I might still get home before you came. I am so sorry to be so late, but you must turn back with me now."

Nellie was not prepared for such cordiality, and the warmth of Christie's manner melted away the stiffness and haughtiness which she had intended to show. It was so evident that Mrs. Stanley had fully expected her to accept the invitation, that Nellie felt as if it would be a little awkward for her to disclaim all intention of accepting it.

"I may as well go just to see what she wants me

for," she thought to herself, so she turned back to the house with Christie.

As soon as the latch of the gate clicked the door opened, and a flood of light and warmth came out into the cold evening.

"I was growing anxious about you," Mr. Stanley exclaimed. "It was so late, and I did not know what had detained you. I was just thinking that I would go in search of you."

Christie explained again the reason of her detention, and introduced her companion, whom Mr. Stanley greeted almost as cordially as his wife had done, and then as the evening meal was still waiting, Christie bade Nora put another place at the table, and insisted upon Nellie's coming out to tea with them.

A spirit of bitterness had always rankled in Nellie's heart toward those who had pleasant homes and plenty of this world's goods, and she was always watching for slights, which her pride would at once resent, whether real or fancied. For once in her life she forgot this feeling, for she had to acknowledge to herself that no guest could have been more cordially welcomed than she was in this home.

It was a new experience to her. She had never seen a tea-table daintily set with delicate china and spotless linen, and the well-cooked, appetizing food looked as different as it was possible to imagine from the "messes," as she contemptuously styled them, of the boarding-house. She had no appetite for her

dinner before, but she enjoyed this meal very much, all the more because she was not allowed time to grow shy and self-conscious, but was drawn into the pleasant conversation. There was not the slightest trace of patronage or condescension in the manner of either Mr. or Mrs. Stanley, and not the most sensitive person could have imagined that there was a flaw in the cordial welcome. "They don't talk shop, either, that's a comfort," Nellie thought, with a feeling of relief, for she had rather expected that when they sat down the conversation would consist of inquiries about the factory and her work there.

"I have enough of that through the day, and if they think I want to talk about that they will find they are mistaken," she had thought when she drew her chair up to the table; but she was compelled to admit to herself that the conversation could not have taken a pleasanter channel if she had been an honored guest instead of only a factory hand. Both her host and hostess seemed to take it for granted that she would be interested in all the matters that interested them, and Nellie grew quite animated over the little sick boy when Christie told her what a dear little fellow he was, and how patiently he had borne his sufferings. In her turn she told Mrs. Stanley about her sick friend, and unconsciously gave her listeners an idea of the loyalty of her friendship when she spoke of the long nights she had spent at the girl's bedside, and how hard the girls had all worked to help make up her loss. By the time they

rose from the table Nellie had quite forgotten that she meant to be as disagreeable as possible, and was her natural self, not quite as self-assertive and independent as she was among her companions, but all the more pleasing in her manner because of a little diffidence, which made her more gentle than her wont.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A NEW ACQUAINTANCE.

"Now I want to tell you what I have been thinking about," Christie said, when tea was over and Mr. Stanley had gone out to make some calls, leaving his wife and her visitor in the sitting-room before the cosy open fire.

Nellie leaned back luxuriously in the easy-chair Mrs. Stanley had drawn up before the fire for her, telling her that she knew she would be tired enough to enjoy it after her night's vigil and her busy day. Nellie was very fond of pretty things, and although her taste was not cultivated nor refined, and she was satisfied with the gaudy colors and flashy appearance of her clothes, yet this pleasant room with its tasteful furnishings and dainty bits of bric-a-brac satisfied her love of beauty as nothing had ever done hitherto. She would have been contented to simply sit still and look around her and enjoy the delightful sense of being welcome here, and the miserable room at the boarding-house seemed drearier than ever in comparison. Suddenly a wave of bitter feeling swept over her, and the softened expression upon her face vanished, leaving the hard, bold look that was generally there in its place. Why should some

people have all this comfort, and an easy life, while others had nothing pleasant in their lives and had to work hard for even enough to eat and a place to sleep? It was not right, and she felt as if she hated all the world as she contrasted her condition with that of Mrs. Stanley.

She had been so pleasant all through tea time that Christie had really looked forward with pleasurable anticipations to having a good talk with her, and finding out how she could best go to work to carry out her plans. She was not prepared for this change of mood, and when drawing up her rocking-chair beside Nellie, she went on, "I want to get acquainted with the girls in the factory, and I think you can tell me better than any one else how I can manage it," she was surprised at the rude reply, "We are quite able to pick out our own friends, thank you, ma'am, and you needn't trouble yourself to interfere with us."

It was so utterly unlike anything that Christie had expected her to say that for a moment she was too much taken aback to speak. Her first feeling was one of indignation. After all her kindness to the girl, and her efforts to show her that she did not mean to patronize her, but meet her on an equal ground, she felt that she did not deserve this from her. For an instant she felt like giving up all her kind intentions, but she checked herself in this feeling. It was not wholly for the sake of the girls that she wanted to help them; it was from a higher motive

than mere kindly feeling toward them; and she must be willing to bear patiently with them, if they did not respond as she would have liked to have had them.

"Miss Lewis, I don't think you quite mean that," she said gently, after a moment's pause. "I know you are not very well acquainted with me, but I think you have known me long enough to know that it is not for any purpose of interfering that I have asked you to come and see me. I wish you would believe me when I tell you that I really want to be your friend, and that any thoughts and plans I have concerning you are only kind ones, that I am sure you will like when you know about them."

"You had better let us alone," returned Nellie sullenly. "You can't know anything about us or how we have to live—how should you? You have every thing you want, you can take things easy and have a good time, so you can't understand what it is to have to work like a dog all the time or starve. I don't see why one person should have everything and another nothing. I don't see any right or justice in it. What are you better than me except that you have been brought up like a lady without soiling your hands, while I have never had any one to lift a hand for me? You needn't try to make us feel the difference by trying to patronize us. You have had chances, and we haven't, and that makes the difference between us."

There was such a bitter, despairing tone in the

girl's voice that, rough though her words were, Christie pitied her instead of being vexed at her. She could imagine how sharp the contrast must be between her own home and Nellie's, and she did not wonder that the girl was rebellious.

"I know that there is a great deal of difference in our lives that we have not anything to do with ourselves," she answered gently. "It is because I have so many blessings that I want to share them with others who have not so many. I enjoy my home so much that I want to let others have some of it too, and it was just this that I wanted to talk to you about. I know that it is not because I deserve it that I have been so blessed, and I want to show my thankfulness for all my mercies by doing what little I can to make others happier. I shall be very much disappointed if you will not let me. I wish you could feel as kindly toward me, Nellie, as I feel toward you. I know your life must be a hard one, and I would be so glad to help you get all the brightness you could out of it. You know what a happiness it is to do for others, for I have heard how kind you are to the other girls, and how much you do for them. Can't you let me have that same pleasure?"

A softened expression gradually banished the look upon Nellie's face as she listened to Christie. There was no assumption of any superiority, no looking down upon those less fortunate than herself, only a loving desire to divide with those who had not the blessings which made her so happy; and bitter as her

heart was, she could find nothing to resent in Christie's words.

Her bright black eyes filled with tears, which slowly stole down her cheeks. Was it possible that Mrs. Stanley, who seemed to have everything that heart could wish, was offering to be her friend and wanted to do something to make her happier? She must mean it, or she would not have been so kind to her after the rude repulse she had received. There was too much innate nobility in the girl, with all her faults, for her not to regret that she had done injustice to one who wished to be kind to her, and making an effort to steady her voice, she said,

"I'm sorry I spoke that way to you, Mrs. Stanley. I ought to have known that you were different from other people, or you wouldn't have been as good to me as you have been this evening. You don't know how ugly it makes me, though, to know that people look down on us and think we are only trash because we have to work in the factory for a living. I guess any of us would be glad enough if we didn't have to work so hard. We are just left out of all the good times that other people have, and no one wants to have anything to do with us."

"Then won't you help me plan something different?" said Christie; and feeling sure now of Nellie's sympathy, she told her some of the plans she had made.

"You don't know how different it will make things for us," Nellie answered. "If we only had some-

thing nice to look forward to once in a while we wouldn't mind the work, but it is just drudge, drudge, drudge all the time without anything else mixed in. To walk around town in the evenings isn't any fun, though we have to do it, for there isn't anything else to do with ourselves till bedtime. There is hardly one of the girls that has ever been out to spend the evening in a house as nice as this. My, they will think it is just elegant!" and she glanced around the room admiringly.

She helped Christie make out a list for the first evening's invitations and at first suggested that she should be left till another evening.

"You see I have had a good time this evening, and I can wait," she said, and then confessed with a sudden impulse of honesty, "Do you know, I had no thought of coming here to-night, Mrs. Stanley. I wanted to show you that I didn't care anything about you, and so I went right past the house; and then I met you, and you seemed to think I had meant to come, and so I didn't like to say I hadn't."

"I am very glad I met you then," Christie answered. "I should have been very much disappointed if you had not come. It is very kind in you to think of waiting till the last evening, but don't you think that perhaps it would be better to come on account of the other girls? We are acquainted now, and you can help me get acquainted with them, but if you are not here it will take so much longer."

"That's so," Nellie replied. "I guess I had better

come after all. I just wish you could see how pleased the girls will be when they know that they are coming. I won't tell them anything about it, and then it will be a surprise to them when they get your invitation. You were awful good to think about it, Mrs. Stanley, and it would have served me just right if you had given it all up when I was so ugly about it."

"I was too much in earnest to be so easily discouraged," Christie answered. "It will give me as much pleasure as it will you, and I think that I can arrange to send out the invitations for some evening next week. I am so glad I had a chance to talk it over with you first, for I wanted to know just how the girls would feel about it."

"Well, I must be going now," Nellie said, as the clock struck nine. "I am so tired to-night that I ought to get to sleep early, but you don't know how coming here has rested me. It has been so different from everything else. Good-night."

Going back to the cheerless room was harder than ever after her glimpse into something so different, but there was a new feeling in her heart in the place of the bitter recklessness that had been there so long, as she thought that she had a friend who cared for her if she was only a factory hand, and meant to help her to greater happiness than she had known hitherto.

Of the infinite love that was the source of this human kindness she had no thought or knowledge as yet, poor child.

CHAPTER XXIX.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

It was a delightful November morning, clear and crisp, with a suggestion of frost in the air that made one's ears tingle and brought a ruddy glow to the cheeks. Christie was walking rapidly down the street when she heard the sound of a horse's feet coming swiftly along behind her, and in another moment the doctor's buggy drew up beside her and he leaned out to speak to her.

"Mrs. Stanley, haven't you time to take a drive this morning?" he asked. "I am going out in the country about three miles, and it is such a beautiful morning that I tried to persuade my wife to go with me. She had something on hand that she couldn't leave, and so she told me to see if you couldn't go."

"I should like to go very much indeed," Christie answered, pleased at the prospect of a drive, and soon she was snugly seated beside the doctor and rolling rapidly along the frozen road.

It did not take very long for the doctor's spirited horse to accomplish three miles, and when they reached the house where he intended to make his call he drew out his watch and glanced at it before he got out of the buggy.

"Mrs. Stanley, if you would like to drive a little farther instead of waiting in front of the house for me, which would be rather stupid amusement, you could go as far as the pond and then turn round and come back for me. It is a pleasant little drive and you are not afraid of the horse, I know. He's as gentle as a lamb, if he is a little frisky. A doctor's horse feels the responsibilities of his position too much to run away, so you can trust him."

"I should like to do that very much," Christie answered, as she took up the lines. "How soon shall you be ready to have me come for you?"

"In about twenty-five minutes," the doctor answered. "I want to make a little longer call than usual this morning, for I have a patient in here who needs cheering up more than medicine."

Christie drove away, and the doctor opened the gate and strode up to the door in the brisk way that one of his patients declared always made her feel better to begin with, "for it seemed as if he was in a hurry to get there and cure the trouble right up."

It was a boarding-house, and the mistress herself came to the door as she saw the doctor's buggy drive away.

"Good-morning, doctor," she said. "I want to talk to you a moment about Miss Allison, if you will step into the parlor."

She shut the door behind them and then turned to the doctor, and said,

"I just wanted to tell you that your medicines won't

do her much good if she keeps on fretting the way she has been doing. She is worrying because her board is running up, and because she can't get back to work any sooner; and I tell her she just uses up her strength in worrying. If I hadn't a pretty hard time to get along anyhow, I would tell her she is welcome to her board while she has been sick, but you know as well as I do that I can't do that, doctor, though I haven't charged her a cent for all the extra work and waiting on, and meals up-stairs and all; so that is as much as I can do. I tell her she can take her time to pay me, but she seems to feel as if she had a perfect mountain on her shoulders, and she won't wait till she's well before she tries to carry it. I don't know what to do with her, she frets so; and I just made up my mind I would get you to speak to her."

"I'll try and cheer her up a little," the doctor returned. "I know you do all you can for her, Mrs. Davies, and you have been a real good friend to her since she has been sick. If your purse were as big as your heart I know you would do ever so much more; but after all there are better ways of helping people than with money, and she appreciates all that you have done, I know. You do your best to brighten her up and I will do my part."

The patient's door was partly open, and as the doctor went up-stairs he saw Miss Allison leaning back in her easy-chair, with her hands over her face, sobbing convulsively, while some sewing upon which

she had evidently been at work was lying in her lap.

"Well, well, this is a pretty way to carry out my directions!" the doctor exclaimed in his cheery, genial voice, drawing up a chair and sitting down beside his patient. "Why, Miss Allison, you will put yourself back in bed again if you give way so to your feelings. What is the matter now?"

"Nothing new," the young girl answered, trying to check her tears as she replied to the doctor's question; "only I am so completely discouraged that I don't believe I want to get well at all. I shall never be strong enough to work again, I believe, and what will become of me? I am just a burden to every one now, and I shall never be anything else. I tried to sew a little this morning to see how much strength I had, and I could only take a few stitches before I was tired out. When I shall ever get strong enough to sew all day I can't imagine, and here I am running behind all the time, and my bills will be so large that I can't pay them in years. I do try not to worry, but it is dreadful to sit here all day and just think and think. I am so tired of everything in the room that even the paper on the wall makes my head ache. If it was only something else besides those simpering old bunches of roses, I don't believe it would be as bad, though perhaps anything else would be the same if I had looked at it for so many weeks. Please don't get out of patience with me for being so childish, but indeed I

am so tired of everything that I feel as if I could not stand another day of this room."

"I am not a bit out of patience with you," the doctor answered soothingly. "You need a change, that is all, for you have been shut up in this one room so long that it would be a hard matter for you not to feel pretty tired of it sometimes. Isn't there some place where you can make a little visit for a week or two? Even as short a change as that would do you a world of good, and you will be surprised to find out how it will brighten you up."

Miss Allison shook her head.

"No, I don't know any one who would want me to come feeling as I do now. If I were perfectly well and able to help around, I know of a place where I could make a visit; but I can't go anywhere sick and weak as I am. I had better die, for no one wants me. I can't do a thing to be of any use."

"Of course you can't just now," the doctor answered. "No one wants or expects you to do anything while you are just getting over an attack of typhoid fever. Be contented to do nothing until you are strong enough for work. I know it is hard not to worry and feel despondent, but you must remember it will take you all the longer to get well if you give up in this way."

"If I only had mother!" and the tears began to flow again. "Oh, I don't see why she was taken away from me when she was all I had. I never wanted her more than I have this year. I was think-

ing only a little while ago what a happy Thanksgiving we had together last year, and now this year I am sick and alone and so miserable. I do miss her so! If I had had any time to be prepared for her going I think it would have been easier, but to have her taken away so suddenly was too hard."

"You wouldn't have asked to have it otherwise though for her sake," said the doctor. "You told me then that you could be glad that death had been only a glorious translation to her, without any suffering or fear of death. You would not have had her linger and suffer so that you could be prepared for the end, and it would have been just as hard for you now if you had had more time for preparation. I know how you must miss her, but you have a work yet to do in the world, and you must get strong and well so that you can do it. Her work was finished, but you cannot lay yours down yet. Try not to feel so lonely. Remember that you have a Friend close beside you who will comfort you as a mother comforteth her children if you will let him. Now I must be going, and I want you to promise me that you will try to keep up your courage and trust, though you cannot see the way just now."

"I will try," she promised, and then as the doctor rose to go, she said, "Oh, doctor, have you time for just a word of prayer with me before you go? I am almost too discouraged to pray for myself, and I know it will help me to be stronger."

"Certainly I have time for that," and the tender, earnest committal of the weakness and troubles and perplexities of the invalid to the great Physician quieted her throbbing pulse as no potion could have done.

"Thank you so much!" she said gratefully. "I ought not to feel alone in the world when I have such a kind friend as you are. I will try to do as you tell me, indeed I will."

"That's right. Now keep up your tonic, sleep and rest all you can, don't worry, and you will soon be all ready to face the world again. I will tell you what I am going to do," he added, as just then he saw Christie driving toward the house. "I am going to send you a visitor who will be worth a whole bottle of tonic to you at one visit. I don't believe you know her, but you will like her I am sure. I mean our minister's wife, Mrs. Stanley. She is just the brightest little woman I know of, and her heart is as big as all out doors. She will come and see you, I know, if you would like to have her, and she'll do you good."

"I should like to have her come very much," Miss Allison answered, and with a few last directions the doctor took his departure, and opened the front door just as Christie drove up, her cheeks aglow with the bracing air.

"I have been making a promise for you," he said, as he got into the buggy and took the reins.

"What is it?" asked Christie.

"I have a patient in there who would get well if she could only be brightened up and encouraged a little, and I told her I would ask you to come and see her. I know you are a busy little woman, but I have always found that I must go to the busiest people if I want to have anything done, so I have no doubt but that you will find time to go and make her a little visit."

"I should be very glad to, if you think I would do her any good," Christie answered. "Who is it, doctor?"

"I don't believe you know her," the doctor replied. "She is a Miss Allison, a member of the Baptist church. She and her mother used to live together in that pretty little cottage that you will see when we turn the next corner, and they were very happy together. They took in dress-making and did very well at it, I believe. Her mother died very suddenly of heart failure about ten months ago, and since then Mary has had a hard life. She has missed her mother very much for one thing, as they were constant companions and very devoted to each other, and then she had to leave her home and board among strangers. It has been hard for her to get along alone, but she has been going out dress-making by the day, and earned her way until she was taken sick about two months ago with typhoid fever. It has been pretty hard for her there, though Mrs. Davies, the woman who keeps the boarding-house, has been as kind as possible to her; but she is

a busy woman, and of course she had not time with all her other work to take very much care of Mary, beyond giving her her medicine at the right times. I was afraid she was not going to pull through, part of the time, but she is able to sit up now, and if she could only have a change would soon regain her strength. I wish she could go somewhere for a week or two, for she is tired of the very wall-paper in the room where she has been sick so long; but she has not any friends to whom she can go in her present condition. She is alone most of the time, and then she gets to brooding over her mother's death, and her own illness and the expenses which are accumulating of course while she is sick—all of which is very natural, but very bad for her. If she could only have a little change, even to some house here in town where she could have pleasant society and a little bit of home life, so that her thoughts would be diverted from herself and she would not feel so alone in the world, it would help her recovery along wonderfully. As she can't have that, however, the next best thing will be for her to have a little society to brighten her up, and it will do her ever so much good if you can go out to see her. To-morrow is Thanksgiving, and of course you won't feel like going then; but the day after if you can arrange to go, your husband can come and get my horse to drive you out."

"Oh, thank you," exclaimed Christie. "That will be very nice, for I was just wishing she was a

little nearer at hand. I wonder if I have not seen her. Is she a tall slender girl, with dark hair and blue eyes ? I think I saw her sewing at Mrs. Bateman's one day when I went past the house. I looked up expecting to see Mrs. Bateman at the window and saw Miss Allison instead."

"Very likely you did," the doctor answered, "for she does a good deal of sewing for my wife. She is a very bright, sweet girl, and a good Christian too, and that she is not able to trust in the Lord's love and care for her is more due to her physical condition than to her spiritual, though every now and then she adds that to her other worries. Poor child, I should like to see a good friend raised up for her, for a little human help and sympathy just now would go a long way with her. I am glad you are going to see her."

"I will do all I can to cheer her up," Christie replied earnestly.

As they drove along the doctor told her more about the patient in whom he was so interested, and by the time he left Christie at her door she felt as if she had already become acquainted with Miss Allison.

CHAPTER XXX.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

DINNER was ready when Christie entered the house, and after they sat down at the table she told her husband all about her drive with the doctor, and about the patient he had gone to see.

"I am so sorry for her," she concluded. "When a couple of weeks' change would do her so much good, doesn't it seem hard that she has no friend who could open her home to her? I mean to be real kind to her, and go to see her at least once a week if the doctor will lend us his horse. I am afraid I could hardly walk out there. To-morrow will be such a dreary Thanksgiving for her, for last year she was with her mother in her own home, instead of being sick and alone. We shall have such a happy Thanksgiving that I can't bear to think of any one being desolate and unhappy.

"Oh, oh," she exclaimed a moment later, so eagerly that her husband looked up in surprise, wondering what had occurred to her so suddenly.

"Well, what is it?" he asked. "Out with it at once before your excitement is too much for you."

"I have a perfectly splendid idea, if only you will think so too," Christie answered. "I am so afraid

you won't like it, because I know how you like to be all by ourselves, and I know it isn't pleasant to have a stranger around; but it would make me so happy if you would say yes that I really think you will."

"I have no doubt of it," said Mr. Stanley laughingly. "Perhaps I can guess what your wonderful idea is without your telling me. Do you want to invite Miss Allison here for a little visit?"

"You have guessed it exactly," Christie responded. "I know it seems a rather quixotic thing to do as long as I don't know her at all, and she does not belong to your flock; but I think it would be such a lovely surprise to her to just be carried off to rest and get well here, and I should enjoy it so much. I don't think I was ever more sorry for any one than I was for her, when the doctor told me about her, and it would make me very happy to help her get well. I do wish we could get her here for to-morrow. It would be such a pleasant Thanksgiving for her. Do you suppose we could manage it?"

"Ask the doctor about it," answered her husband. "Perhaps he will not approve of having his patient moved yet; but if he is willing and thinks she can come to-day, I will gladly do all I can to help you bring her here without any delay."

Christie was so eager to carry out her new plan that she could hardly wait to finish her dinner, and as soon as her husband arose she put on her hat and went over to the doctor's at once. He had just finished his dinner and was going into the office, where

several patients were awaiting him. He saw Christie coming, and waited to speak to her.

"Oh, doctor, could Miss Allison be moved to-day?" she asked.

"Moved?" queried the doctor, looking surprised.

"Oh, I began at the wrong end of what I wanted to say," Christie said laughingly. "I ought to have told you first that we want to have her make us a visit of two or three weeks; and I thought it would be so much pleasanter for her to-morrow if she could be with us than if she were alone. If you think it would not be too much for her to be brought out this afternoon, I would go and see her at once, and bring her home with me before it is too late."

"It won't hurt her one bit," the doctor answered. "I can't tell you how much good a little visit in your home will do her, but I do not need to try, for you will see for yourself. I will tell you what I will do. I must go into the office and see my patients now; but in half an hour, or three quarters at most, I shall be at liberty, and I will have the horse put to the close carriage and go with you. Is that too short notice for you?"

"Not at all," Christie answered. "I have but very little preparation to make. Shall I come back here, or will you call for me?"

"I will call for you," the doctor answered, as he went into the office, and Christie hastened home, that she might go up to the pretty spare room and make the few preparations that were necessary, and

tell Nora to light a fire that the room might be warm when her guest should come.

"Oh, Howe," she exclaimed, throwing her arms impulsively about him, as he came in to see what her plans were for the reception of Miss Allison. "Isn't it the loveliest thing in the world to have a home like our dear little nest, that we can open to any one who needs a little bit of sunshine? I do believe this will be the happiest Thanksgiving I ever spent."

"You are a bit of sunshine yourself, dear little wifie," said her husband fondly, as he returned her embrace. "It isn't the home so much as the home-maker who is so lovely. I don't believe anything in the world delights your generous little heart so much as making some one else happy. There comes the doctor now. I hope Miss Allison will be as happy as you are, for I don't believe I could wish her any greater happiness."

"I am sure you could not," Christie answered, as she put on her wraps and went down-stairs.

Miss Allison was sitting by the window, her hands folded in her lap, trying to keep her promise to the doctor not to work nor worry. It was a hard matter, for she was impatient every hour to test her strength, or rather her weakness, and when she found out how far from being able to work she was, it seemed impossible to banish the despondency which made her feel as if she did not want to resume life where she had dropped the threads two months ago.

"No one cares whether I live or die," she said

bitterly to herself. "I have not the smallest corner in any one's home that I can claim as mine. If I could only turn back to a year ago when I had dear mother, and was so happy in our own little home! It will be a dreary Thanksgiving for me, sick and alone, with no one to care whether I am happy or not. It is hard not to think that even God has forgotten me, when I am so friendless and helpless."

She saw the carriage rolling down the road, but she little dreamed that it was bringing a friend to her. It stopped before the house, and she saw the doctor get out followed by a lady.

"Oh, he is bringing Mrs. Stanley to see me," she thought. "I am glad, for I think I shall like her. I saw her once, I remember, and she had such a pleasant face."

A few moments later Mrs. Davies ushered Christie into the room followed by the doctor.

"We have come to carry you off," the doctor said, introducing Mrs. Stanley to the invalid.

"Yes, I want to take you home with me," said Christie, answering the look of surprised inquiry upon Miss Allison's face. "Will you mind accepting an invitation upon such short notice?"

A look of incredulous delight dawned upon the pale face. "Do you really mean it?" she asked.

"Indeed she does," the doctor replied. "I came to help her kidnap you in case you offered any resistance, so you see you had better surrender at discretion. Now Mrs. Davies will help you get ready

whatever you want to bring with you, and I will wait down-stairs till you are ready to start, and then I will come up and bring you down to the carriage, for I am afraid the stairs will be too much for you the first time. When you come back you will be able to run up as quickly as ever—but I must not let you anticipate. Now don't exert yourself getting ready any more than you can help, for you have the drive yet before you."

Kind-hearted Mrs. Davies was as delighted as if she had received the invitation for herself, and bustled about, getting Miss Allison's necessaries together as quickly as possible.

"I am so glad she is going to have a little change," she said to Christie. "She has to be alone here so much, for of course I have to be about the house and can't sit with her, and so she gets blue and lonesome, and frets—which ain't worth while, if only I could make her think so. It will do her a world of good to be with folks and have something new to see. I was wishing with all my heart only this very day that she could go somewhere, though I didn't like to tell her so for fear she would think that I wanted to get rid of her; and it wasn't that at all, for she's more than welcome here. There, I guess you won't need anything else, and if you do you can send me word and I will let one of the boys take anything in to you that you find you need. Good-bye; have a nice time, and come back real well."

The doctor came up-stairs as soon as Mrs. Davies

told him that the invalid was ready, and Christie wrapped an extra shawl around her lest she should be chilled by the frosty air on the way to the carriage.

"Oh, I am too heavy to carry," protested Miss Allison, but the doctor only laughed.

"Not a bit of it," he said. "I wish you were, but you will soon be less ethereal when your appetite comes back."

The excitement and the fresh air brought a little glow of color to the pale cheeks, and she looked very little like the despondent invalid of half an hour ago.

Short as the drive was, it was long enough to remind her that her stock of strength was very slender as yet, and she was glad when the carriage drew up at Mrs. Stanley's door and she was carried up to the pretty room that was such a delightful contrast to the sick-room that she had grown so tired of during her long weeks of illness.

"It is so homelike and lovely here!" she exclaimed gratefully, as Christie relieved her of her wraps and made her lie down and rest. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't try," said Christie, quite as happy in seeing her guest's pleasure as Miss Allison herself could have been.

The exercise and unaccustomed fatigue gave the invalid a more restful sleep than she had known for some time, and when she opened her eyes at tea-time

to see Christie standing beside her with a neatly arranged tray in her hand, she felt as if she had gained new strength already. After she had eaten the carefully prepared meal, which was dainty enough to tempt the most capricious appetite, Christie insisted upon helping her undress and lingered until she was all ready for her night's rest; then leaving a little call-bell beside her, that she might ring if she needed anything, she bade her good-night and went down-stairs to enjoy the luxury of an evening alone with her husband, enjoying it all the more because she had the satisfaction of knowing that she had cheered and encouraged one who sorely needed human help and sympathy.

It was not very often that the husband and wife could spend an evening alone together, for there were so many church engagements, calls that must be made in the evening, and visitors who dropped in to spend a social hour, that they rarely were uninterrupted, even if they had expected to be alone. They enjoyed each other's society so much that they looked upon it as a treat to have a little time of intercourse when the cares and duties of the day were over and they could feel free to take the time for pleasant chat.

They were adjusting themselves to each other with very little of the friction that usually mars the smoothness of the first year of married life. Not that they never held contrary opinions, but each was willing to give up for the sake of the other; and

their love for each other was too tender to admit of the little discourtesies and thoughtless deeds that are apt to make the first rift within the lute. They were as studiously thoughtful of each other's feelings and comfort as they could have been if they were almost strangers to each other, though too often it is the case that those whom we love best see that which is least lovely in us, and have their feelings wounded by our thoughtlessness or selfishness as those for whom we do not care never do.

If either husband or wife failed in thoughtfulness or gentleness to the other, no false pride kept back a swift apology, and the wound was healed at once before it had time to rankle. Whatever made one happy rejoiced the heart of the other, and so Mr. Stanley welcomed their guest cordially because her coming gave so much pleasure to his wife, although it was a little sacrifice to him to have a stranger share in their home life for two weeks.

Thanksgiving Day dawned cold and clear, and the bells which rang the summons to church waked joyous echoes in many a heart which had abundant mercies for which to give thanks. The day which might have been such a lonely one to Miss Allison was a happier one than she could have believed possible when she found herself a member of this pleasant home circle, cordially welcomed to their board and made to feel that she was an honored guest, as they indeed felt that she was, since they had the assurance that whatever they did for this

sick and despondent one in His name was being done for the Master himself; and was it not a rare honor to bid Him to their Thanksgiving feast? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

CHAPTER XXXI.

REAPING.

CHRISTIE did not forget about Miss Nelson and her conversatien with her, and very often during the days which followed did she think of her and pray that she might be led to find peace. She had hoped that she might hear from her soon, but a week passed away without any word, and Christie looked in vain for her at Sunday-school. Her class was composed of little girls who had but recently been taken from the infant-class, and as no teacher had been provided and there was no one who was at liberty to take the class, the children were sent into the infant-class for the day.

At first they were disposed to pout about it, for they had been proud of their promotion; but when they found how different the room looked and how bright and interesting the new teacher made the lesson, they began to wish that they might come back into their old class again. As Christie looked at their bright, intelligent faces she hoped more earnestly that their teacher might be taught of God, so that she would be able to lead them in the right way.

Her thoughts were so much with Miss Nelson

that on Wednesday morning she felt that she could not wait any longer to see her, and leaving Miss Allison reading an interesting book in the easy-chair by the sitting-room fire, she went to see her friend.

"Miss Nelson is not very well and I do not think she can see any one," the girl said when she opened the door; but she went up-stairs to take the visitor's name, and presently returned, saying that Miss Nelson would be glad to see Mrs. Stanley. Christie followed the girl up-stairs and was ushered into the room where Miss Nelson was in bed, her face buried in the pillows.

"I am so sorry you are sick!" Christie said, sitting down on the edge of the bed and putting her hand on her friend's shoulder. "Perhaps you were not feeling well enough to see me."

"It isn't that I am sick, but I am so miserable!" Miss Nelson answered in a voice broken with emotion. "I have been just as wretched as I could be ever since that morning I was at your house, and I feel as if I could not bear it a day longer. I feel as if I was too wicked to live, and I don't know what to do. At first I thought I couldn't see you, and then I thought that inasmuch as what you said had made me so miserable, perhaps you could say something to make me feel better. What shall I do? How can I find peace and rest?"

"It is so easy, dear," Christie answered. "'Come unto me and I will give you rest,' says Christ. It is just to tell the Saviour about your burden as simply

as you have told me, and he will lift it from your shoulders and give you the peace which nothing can take away. Don't try to bear it alone any longer, but lay it at his feet."

"I can't. I don't know how," Miss Nelson answered. "Nothing seems real to me except this dreadful sense of wickedness. It is as if I was in a black cloud and couldn't see anything beyond it. It sounds so easy I know, but I can't do it. I can't pray even. I have always said my prayers after a fashion, but when I try to pray now, it seems as if they just fell back upon me. I don't know what will ever become of me, for I can never be happy and careless again, and I cannot bear being so wretched any longer. I don't know why I am not angry with you for making me so miserable. I always thought that there wasn't any happiness in being religious, and now I have found out for myself that there isn't."

"Dear, it is only because you have not yet found peace with God that you are so unhappy," Christie answered earnestly. "I know how miserable you must be, for there is no burden in the world as heavy as that of a sense of sin unforgiven. I know too it would seem easier to do some great thing to win pardon. It seems like such a little thing to just take one's sins to the Saviour and ask him to wash them away that it is harder to do it than it would be to make some great sacrifice. When you have passed out from under the shadow of this cloud you will find how much happiness there is in religion. I can-

not be sorry that what I said has made you unhappy if it only brings you to the Saviour at last. Try to believe that he is loving you even now better than any earthly friend could love you, and that he is waiting to receive you. Tell him all about it, how hard it is to trust him and to go to him, but ask him to help you, and you will find that the answer will come very soon."

"I can't believe it though," was the despairing answer. "Of course I believe in God. I never believed in him as I do just now when I am so afraid of him and dread his judgment so, but I can't believe that he loves me or will forgive me."

"Ask him to help you believe then, since that is your first need," Christie replied. "If you only could know, as you soon will, how infinitely tender his love is, you would go to him quickly and believe that he could lighten your burden at once. He has promised that he will receive all who come to him, and surely you can trust his promises Don't wait any longer, but go to him at once with all your distrust and unbelief. If you can only say, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief,' you will find that he will come to you and strengthen your faith. Can't you, dear?"

Miss Nelson shook her head.

"I know how easy it seems to you, but I can't. What shall I do?"

"'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.'" Christie repeated reverently the answer

which brought peace to a despairing soul many centuries ago.

"I don't want to go and leave you until you are happier," she said presently, stroking her friend's hair with a soft caressing touch that stilled her sobbing. "I wish I could do something for you."

"Can't you pray for me," Miss Nelson asked in smothered tones. "If you believe, perhaps your prayers will be answered, even though it is of no use for me to pray. I can't pray for myself."

Christie hesitated for just an instant. She had never prayed aloud before another, and she shrank from it with a shyness that those who are unaccustomed to public prayer will understand. It was only for an instant though, and then she rebuked herself for allowing any thought of self to obtrude itself.

It was a privilege that had been accorded her to bring to the Saviour another's needs and burdens, and she was glad that she had learned for herself the Fatherhood of God, so that she could go to him as freely as a little child would go to an earthly parent, asking from him the priceless boon of another's salvation. She knelt beside the bed, and clasping her friend's hand in her own, prayed very simply but earnestly that peace might come to this troubled heart.

Her voice trembled with earnestness as she realized how great a gift she was entreating, and as simply as her friend had told her she told the Father about the unbelief, the darkness of doubt that held

this soul away from him, and asked from the Saviour the grace he had freely bestowed on her.

"Thank you," Miss Nelson said, after a pause, when Christie had risen. "I will try, indeed I will, and you have helped me ever so much. Your belief makes me believe in spite of myself. Must you go now? Won't you come and see me again to-morrow, please?"

"Indeed, I will," Christie promised. "And I hope that long before then you will have found the light. I shall think of you and pray for you every hour. Good-bye."

She could not be sorry that her friend was disturbed so sorely if the end would be a peace deeper and more lasting than than that of indifference. It was not when the pool of Bethesda lay calm and serene, kissed into radiance by the Orient sun, that the great work of healing the sick was performed. Not till the angel had stirred the tranquil depths were the wonderful cures wrought. So it is with the soul. Not until the Spirit troubles it, and it is stirred to its very depths, does healing come and the sin-sick soul find peace and rest.

Many a time during the day did her thoughts and prayers return lovingly to the quiet room where a soul was settling the great matter of its eternal salvation, and she hoped the hour would soon come when Miss Nelson could say that all was well with her and she had found peace. Christie was wondering whether she should not send a little note of

loving inquiry to her friend that evening when the bell rang and a letter was handed to her. She opened it eagerly as she recognized the handwriting and her heart throbbed with joy as she read,

"*Dear Friend*, I have found peace at last. It is all so very plain to me now that I wonder how I could ever have thought it hard. I want to tell you first of all since I owe it all to you.

"Lovingly,

"KATIE NELSON.

Christie's heart was full of solemn thankfulness that night as she realized that the seed that she had sown in weakness and trembling had borne fruit already. Verily God's word should not return to him void, and he had accepted and blessed her efforts to lead another soul to him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SOCIABLE.

"WELL, I suppose I shall see you at the sociable this evening?"

Christie was taking her leave of Mrs. Wilson, upon whom she had been making a morning call, as she uttered these words.

Mrs. Wilson shook her head as she answered very decidedly, "Indeed, you will never see me at a church sociable. It's the last place I would ever think of going."

"Why?" asked Christie in surprise.

She had taken it for granted that all the members of the congregation would probably attend this gathering, the first one given since the coming of their new pastor.

"Because I think a church sociable is the greatest bore in the world," Mrs. Wilson answered promptly. She was a bright little woman who usually spoke her mind very freely, although she usually did it in such a pleasant way that every one was ready to forgive her when she disagreed with them.

"What do you call them bores for?" queried Christie, amused at the promptness of her answer.

"Because they are," was the reply. "I can't see what people ever want to get one up for. Just

imagine it. One has enough pleasant social engagements without giving up an evening to a church sociable, anyway, and it is sure to be given upon an evening when something much pleasanter is going on. Then what possible pleasure can there be in going over to the lecture-room and sitting there for a whole evening? There are always so many stupid people who think they ought to be talked to by every one, whether they know them or not, merely because they go to the same church. One can see one's own particular friends in a much pleasanter way than by going to a church sociable to meet them, and I think it is a great deal better to stay at home than to go and wish with all one's heart that the evening was over. I am always particularly fated. Some old bore will get hold of me and I will have to listen all the evening to talk that isn't of the least interest in the world to me. I really think it's bad for my disposition, for I either have to pretend that I am interested in it all, which makes me deceitful, or else I look tired to death and then people think I am rude and are offended. I have quite make up my mind that the place for me on the occasion of a church sociable is at home, where I will neither be a burden to myself nor to any one else."

Christie laughed in spite of herself.

"Don't you agree with me?" asked Mrs. Wilson.

"No, indeed," Christie responded merrily. "Do you want me to convince you that you ought to go this evening?"

"I will promise you that I will go if you can prove to me that there is good reason for it," Mrs. Wilson replied.

"I will do the best I can, then," Christie said. "You will promise, too, not to be offended at anything I may say?"

"Certainly. I give you absolute freedom of speech," her friend answered. "It's something I claim for myself, so I allow it to every one else."

"First I will put you through a little catechism," Christie began. "I will just premise that these are not my own arguments; they are some that I heard used to bring some one else of your way of thinking over to attendance upon church sociables. What do you suppose is the object of sociables?"

"It is an attempt to have a good time, I suppose," said Mrs. Wilson. "As long as I never have a good time when I go to one, but on the contrary have an unmitigatedly bad time, I think I show my good sense in staying away."

"You mustn't expect me to approve of your standpoint when I mean to make you change your mind," Christie said. "Now I want to ask you something else. Do you suppose the sociables are planned just to give people like you, who have plenty of other social pleasures, good times, or to put some pleasure into the lives of those who have not any enjoyment except that which they receive through their connection with the church?"

"I never was conceited enough to imagine that

they were gotten up for my special benefit," Mrs. Wilson replied, smiling. "Still I hold that that very fact is all the more reason why I should stay away. They are not for my happiness, so why should I go?"

"To add to other people's happiness," Christie replied, and as she saw an incredulous smile upon her friend's face, she went on, "Yes, I mean that. You know very well that you always add a great deal to the enjoyment of every social event, and I am not flattering you a bit when I say that you are the most popular guest in town at any entertainment. You can always make people have a good time when you try to entertain them, and it is for this reason if no other that I want to persuade you that you ought to go to the sociable this evening. This sociable is meant to bring together all the people in the church, and it is the same thing that a family reunion is in home life. It has always seemed to me that it gave the most pleasure to the plainer people in the congregation, who have not as many opportunities for social pleasures as some of the others, and it is sometimes the only opportunity they have of exchanging a few words with the people whom they never meet in any other way. If those who are best fitted to give pleasure by their presence are the ones who stay away, of course the sociable is deprived of its greatest charm. Won't you go if I put it in the light of self-sacrifice for others' happiness? I know some of the people to whom you could make this evening a delightful

remembrance for a long time, if you would only go and try to make them feel at home and welcome."

Mrs. Wilson shook her head.

"I am somewhat sceptical yet," she replied. "Whom could I make happy for instance?"

"You know that tired looking little Mrs. Harvey who sits three pews in front of you?" said Christie. "I know she admires you very much, and she was so pleased that she spoke to me about it one day when you bowed to her going out of church. She said, 'She had such a pleasant smile that it brightened me up for all day.'"

Mrs. Wilson laughed.

"That was the funniest thing. I knew the little woman thought that I was bowing and smiling to her. I had just caught a glimpse of a friend who was coming down the aisle behind her, and as I was in a hurry to get home and didn't want to wait to speak to her, I just nodded and smiled; and Mrs. Harvey, who was in front of her, caught the smile and imagined that I meant it for her. I thought it was not worth while to undeceive her, so I have bowed since, and she always looks so pleased and responds so warmly that I suppose I shall keep it up. That was the way I began it though. You see I don't want any credit that doesn't belong to me."

"You don't know how much pleasure such a little thing gives her," Christie said. "She has a pretty hard time at home with a good deal of care and sickness, and the only break in its monotony is coming

to church. If it was merely a pleasure, I suppose she would think that she oughtn't to take the time; but as she considers it a duty as well, she feels that she must come whether she can spare the time or not. If she comes out to the sociable this evening, though I am almost afraid she will consider it in the light of a luxury and feel that she must dispense with it, it would make her happier than you can believe, perhaps, if you would talk to her for a little while and take some interest in her affairs. I don't mean that you need talk to her about her troubles; it might be better for her to forget them; but just show her that you are interested in her as a member of the same church to which you belong, and that you want her to feel that she is very welcome at the sociable. Wouldn't it be worth while to come just to make her have a good time, when she has so little to make life bright to her?"

"I suppose I am sufficiently magnanimous to be willing to come if it will surely make any one else happier," said Mrs. Wilson. "It never struck me before that the chief object of a sociable was the dispensing of happiness to others. I can see that there might be some use in going under those circumstances. Tell me some more work to do this evening, for it might embarrass Mrs. Harvey to find herself the sole object of my attention."

"You can find out the rest for yourself," said Christie laughingly. "You won't need my help at all, for after you have made Mrs. Harvey radiant for

the evening you will find plenty of others in need of your kindly ministrations. I haven't half argued the matter, for I should make a very poor lawyer. It is only your own kindness of heart that has made you so willing to go. I am glad that you will be there, for indeed you are one of the people who could least be spared."

"How could I resist going after such flattery as that?" asked Mrs. Wilson. "Well, I will be there, since you have convinced me that it is my duty to sacrifice myself for others; and if you can prove to me afterwards that it has done anybody the least good, I will promise to attend all affairs of the kind henceforward, even if it nearly wears me out to amuse the tiresome ones and make up to them for all their home discomforts."

"I am not afraid of any such disastrous results as that," laughed Christie, as she said good-bye once more and started homewards, glad that she had mentioned the sociable, since otherwise it might have lost the company of one who could not well be spared, she could add so much to its success.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

RESULTS.

MRS. WILSON was not a selfish woman, although she often tried to give people the impression that she was very fond of her own pleasure, and she went to the sociable quite determined to talk to those people with whom she did not, as a general thing, have much intercourse. It was a new idea to her, as she said to Christie, that a church sociable was for any other purpose than a place at which to seek amusement for one's self, and she had considered herself quite justified in staying away as long as she could not find enjoyment there. It was quite a different thing to go with the object of making others happy, and looking at the matter in this new light opened her eyes to opportunities that she had never seen before. It naturally gratified her self-love to know that a smile and bow from her was of so much consequence to quiet little Mrs. Harvey, and it was a very cordial greeting that she bestowed upon her that evening when she found her sitting alone in a corner looking rather as if she wished that she had not come.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Harvey. I am glad that you were able to come this evening," she said pleasantly, as she seated herself beside her.

Mrs. Harvey looked gratified and surprised. She had just been wishing that she had not come, as after she had been welcomed by the receiving committee she had felt that there was no one there who cared whether she had come or not, and she thought that she might just as well have stayed at home where there was so much to do, with the big mending basket overflowing with its usual amount of work, and plenty of other tasks besides.

There was no one in the church that she admired quite as much as she did Mrs. Wilson; and to have her sit down beside her and seem so glad to see her was a pleasure she had not dared to hope for. A little flush of pleasure spread over the thin, careworn face, and her eyes brightened as she answered,

"Well, I didn't really expect to come; but my Saidie said, 'Now you must make up your mind to go, mother, for you don't ever go anywhere, and it will do you good and be a rest;' so I thought I would come just to please Saidie, she urged me to so hard."

"Is Saidie your oldest daughter?" asked Mrs. Wilson, rather for the sake of something to say than because she really took much interest in the matter.

"Yes, she is the oldest, and I often say I don't know what I would ever do without her," went on the mother, delighted to have a chance to sound her daughter's praises to an appreciative listener. "I can't begin to tell you what a help she is to me in

every way. She is just like a mother to the little ones."

"It must be a great comfort to have such a helpful daughter," said Mrs. Wilson.

"I do believe I would just give up in despair sometimes, if it wasn't for Saidie," her mother continued. "She is always so bright and so ready to think that everything will be all right sometime. What with all the trouble we have had the last two years, I am sure many another girl would have been quite discouraged, but she has kept cheery through it all. She was going to school and expected to graduate in two years, and then she hoped she would get a place to teach and help us that way with the younger ones, when I was taken sick with the rheumatism. I wouldn't have taken her away from school, no matter how much I needed her, for I knew how her heart was set on graduating with the rest of her class; but one day when she had gone to school, after she had done all she could to leave things handy for me till she should come back again, I was lying in bed fairly crying as I thought of all the things to be done that had to be left to themselves, and wondering how I should ever get along till I got well, when I looked up and saw Saidie coming in. I asked her if she had forgotten something, but she took off her hat and put her books up on a high shelf and came over and kissed me. 'I am going to leave my books up there until you get well,' she said, and though I told her I was willing to worry along the best way I

could so as not to stop her studying, she kept to her word and stayed at home all the rest of the spring. Of course it put her so behind her class that there was no hope of her catching up to them again. She tried to study a little in the evenings, but she would be so tired out that it wasn't any use; so she just gave up trying and gave all her time and attention to the house. She was the best little helper, and as steady as if she had been an old woman instead of just a slip of a girl. She doesn't like house-work either, so it was all the more in her to give her mind to it as she did."

"It was certainly very noble in her," said Mrs. Wilson warmly, reproaching herself for having often thought of Saidie as a plain, uninteresting girl who did not seem to have anything particularly attractive about her.

"She was delighted when it seemed as if there wasn't going to be anything to keep her at home the next year," her mother went on. "She had the money all saved up to buy her books and her clothes for the year, for she got a place in one of the stores here in town to keep the books while the regular book-keeper went home on a vacation. Just the day before school opened her father had a bad fall and was brought home looking like death. I told Saidie that it wouldn't keep her home from school, for I could manage somehow with the help the little ones could give me; but she said she had better keep on at the store a little longer and see if she

could afford to give the place up. If father should be sick a good while we might need the money. We none of us thought then that it would be over six weeks or two months before he would be able to go back to work again, but it kept him shut up all winter. The book-keeper never came back, so Saidie kept the place; and though she didn't get much, yet it was a great help when there wasn't anything else coming in, and one time when her father needed some crutches Saidie went and got them with the money she had saved up for her books. This year there wouldn't be a thing to keep her from going if she only had the books, but they cost a good deal, and it seems as if we couldn't manage to get them anyhow at all. Poor Saidie, she is so patient over it! but it most breaks my heart to see all the girls getting ahead of her, when there isn't one among them that is smarter, if I do say it, nor as good a daughter. She used to be so impatient if she couldn't have her own way, before she joined the church, but you never hear her complain about anything now. Indeed she is the best girl that ever lived, I think, and I tell her some day she will get her reward for all her goodness to me."

"She is a dear girl," Mrs. Wilson assented, touched at this little story of self-sacrifice and uncomplaining patience. "It seems too bad for her to stay at home just on account of the books. Oh, I have just thought of something," she went on, while her face lighted up with pleasure at the remembrance of a shelf of

school-books in excellent preservation which were in her sitting-room. "Mrs. Harvey, I have a great many school-books, and I am sure some of them would do for Saidie. You remember I graduated here at the Academy, and some of them must be the same that are in use now. If Saidie would accept those she would be very welcome to them, and I should be much happier to have them of some use than just lying on a shelf. At the book-store down town they exchange books sometimes, and buy second-hand ones, so those that are not of any use to Saidie now she could have exchanged for newer ones, and I am sure that in that way she could have enough books for this year."

"Oh, how nice that would be!" exclaimed Mrs. Harvey. "Only I can't help feeling as if I had said so much about them that I have sort of asked you for them, but indeed I never thought of such a thing. I only wanted you to know what a dear girl Saidie is."

"Please don't feel as if you had anything to do with the matter," said Mrs. Wilson. "You have certainly given me a great pleasure, for I shall be delighted to be able to help such a brave girl through this year at school; but if I had not just happened to have had the books your telling me about it would not have made any difference. Will you ask Saidie to come and see me to-morrow? I think she knows where I live, and I will show her the books and we will see what they will do."

"You are so good," said Mrs. Harvey gratefully. "It will make Saidie the happiest girl in the world, and I believe it makes me just as happy as it does her, for it seemed so hard that after she had given up so much to help her father and me she should have to give up this year at school too."

Just then some friends came up to Mrs. Wilson, and quite satisfied with the smile she had brought to the tired face, she excused herself from Mrs. Harvey and went away, leaving the mother so delighted with the good fortune that was to come to Saidie that she forgot all the discouragements which had made her lot seem such a hard one only an hour ago.

"To think that it all happened because Saidie made me come to the sociable!" she said to herself. She was not left alone very long, for in a few minutes Christie saw her and came and sat down by her to hear how kind Mrs. Wilson had been and what good news was in store for Saidie.

Mrs. Harvey was not the only one who was made the happier because Mrs. Wilson had decided to come to the sociable. The charm of manner that made her a welcome guest at any social entertainment was not withheld because the people upon whom she exerted it this evening were not her set of friends. More than one person wondered at her choice of associates this evening, and one of her friends caught her to whisper, "Come and sit down here and have a nice time. You have fully done

your duty now in attending to people whom you hardly know."

"I had an object in coming to the sociable this evening," returned Mrs. Wilson, "and I have not carried it out yet. I will see you some other time."

"What object can it possibly be?" her friend asked, but Mrs. Wilson only laughed, with a look of mischief in her brown eyes. "I won't let you into my deep scheme this evening, but I will tell you next time I see you."

There were several others besides Mrs. Wilson and Christie who did their best to make the plainer guests happy that evening, and it was not with any pretence of interest that they talked to them, but with a real desire to know something of those who were members of the same church and were of the same family in Christ.

It was an unusually pleasant evening for all except the few who went solely for their own pleasure, and not finding just the set of friends that they would have wished to meet, were disappointed and aggrieved. It had drawn the church more closely together, and Saidie's fulfilled desires and her mother's pleasure in her child's gratification were not the only results of that evening's entertainment, although Mrs. Wilson felt that to have brought that look of happiness to a tired careworn face would have been ample recompense for her little forgetfulness of self.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AUNT JUDY'S MITTEN.

CHRISTIE had not forgotten to make use of the burned mitten which she had brought home with her from her wedding trip as a remembrance of Aunt Judy. She had told its story first at a missionary meeting in their own church, and then had sent it to her old home with the account of how it came into her possession. The simple story was read at a missionary meeting at which there happened to be one of the Executive Committee of the Board of Home Missions. This lady asked if she might have the mitten with its story, and her request was willingly granted, with the hope that it might stir up other hearts to zeal in the Master's service as it already had in two churches.

Aunt Judy in her little cabin in the pine woods little dreamed of the powerful sermons her ruined work would preach; and when the tale of her self-denial was told before a large city congregation it stirred the depths of some hearts that had never been touched before.

The bank-bills that were dropped into the collection basket were part of the harvest, but not the greatest part. There was one attendant at this mis-

sionary meeting who had not intended being there, and who had very reluctantly gone, because her duties as hostess compelled her.

If you had asked her, Mrs. Sylvester would have told you that her heart and all her interests in life were buried in a quiet cemetery which lay restfully upon a hill-side just above the noisy city. First her husband had gone, and then her oldest child; but still she had something to live for, for her youngest, her baby, needed her care, and through an unusually delicate childhood he absorbed her so completely that she had no time to spend in grieving for those who had gone. He had grown to be a tall sturdy boy who well repaid the love and devotion she had lavished upon him for so many years, and his companionship made her live her younger days over again in entering into his interests and pursuits.

He had left her one afternoon full of life and health, with the affectionate good-bye which he never omitted, whatever his haste, and two hours later he was brought back to her drowned. It was little comfort to her then that he had laid down his own life in a brave effort to save that of another. There came a time long afterwards when she could be glad of it, but at the time she wondered drearily to what end this precious life had been spared so long, since it was thrown away in a vain effort at the end. She wondered why she did not die of her sorrow, and others wondered too that she could live through a loss which seemed so great. She was so

completely prostrated by her grief and she gave herself up to it so utterly, that it did seem as if this heavy blow would fairly crush the life from the delicate form; but to her bitter disappointment her strength came slowly back against her will, and she found that she could not die in spite of her prayers and tears. Life could not be so lightly set aside. Her friends tried in vain to interest her in her old pursuits. Everything was so connected with her boy that associations made every occupation unendurable, and her days were spent in nursing her sorrow. She went to church occasionally, but her heart was not in the services, and when she could she escaped them.

The annual meeting of a ladies' missionary society was to be held in the church of which she was a member, and she was asked if she would entertain one of the delegates. Mrs. Sylvester could not well refuse this request, although she could not welcome any one who would draw her in the slightest degree away from her brooding and sorrow. She reflected that a delegate would not interfere with her liberty as an ordinary guest would, and she need not feel obliged to attend the meetings because she had a guest who would wish to do so.

The name of the guest was sent her and she recognized it as that of one of the officers of the society. It was with a desire to give this honored delegate a comfortable home during her attendance upon the meetings that she had been assigned to Mrs. Sylves-

ter's luxurious home, and if the plan had been carried out no doubt it would have been very pleasant for her.

It so happened that a great many carefully laid plans were very seriously disarranged, or perhaps I should say rearranged, by the sudden and unexpected illness of the chairman of the reception committee. She had expected to be at the trains and welcome the newcomers and assign them to their places of abode during the meeting. She had been selected for this office because she had so much tact, and such a sense of the fitness of things that she knew how best to arrange the guests so that hostess and guest should be mutually congenial. It was a great disappointment therefore when this able manager awoke on the morning of the day for the arrival of the delegates with such a severe nervous headache that although she summoned her utmost force of will to the rescue, she could not raise her head from the pillow.

"What shall I do?" she moaned, as she realized that all she had expected to do must be left to some one else.

"Tell me as well as you can what to do, Cousin Lettie, and I will meet the trains and send the delegates to their places."

"But you won't know who is who," answered her cousin, feeling as if it would be a hopeless task to try to tell any one else all the hundred and one things that she had planned.

"I can ask them their names," Jennie responded promptly, "and at all events it's the best thing you can do, Cousin Lettie, so you had better do it. The first train will be in forty minutes from now, so you won't have time to send for any of the pillars in the missionary society and you will just have to put up with me."

"Well, I suppose it will be the best thing, as you say," answered her cousin with a sigh as she thought how much better she could do this work that she had planned so carefully than any one else could with the most explicit instructions. She drew a little notebook from under her pillow with the names of the delegates and their hostesses marked down in it, and with a few words of advice in case of certain emergencies that might arise, let her cousin start off on her errand, and with a sigh shut her eyes and tried to forget the weary throbbing of her head.

Jennie started off, determined to do her best, and thinking secretly that it surely could not be such an important matter as Cousin Lettie seemed to imagine to read over the list of names and send them to the addresses that were marked opposite to them.

"Why, it would be easier than putting sliced animals together, and I could do that when I was only a small tot," she reflected.

There were certain exigencies that might arise in the case of the delegates that had never arisen among the sliced animals, as she soon discovered, for when the trains came in and she began her duties as

chief receiver and director, she found herself becoming hopelessly confused. In some cases the delegates who had been appointed had been unable to come, and another had been sent whose name was not down on the list, and who seemed to get wholly mixed up in the assignments.

Jennie was only visiting her cousin, and had no idea who Mrs. Sylvester might be, nor why Mrs. Tyler had been assigned to her. To add to her confusion of mind, there were two Mrs. Tylers who made their appearance upon the same train; one a tall distinguished-looking lady, well-dressed, cultured, and with a certain air of self-possession that, if Jennie had known anything about it, would have marked her as the officer for whom pleasant quarters had been especially desired.

The other Mrs. Tyler was a shy little country woman, "a character," mischievous Jennie called her as she looked at the round innocent face, the old-fashioned dress, the prunella gaiters which seemed to mark a past generation, and the cotton gloves which bagged at the ends of the fingers and hung loosely upon the large hands that bore the marks of hard work in the swollen knuckles and large joints. It was evidently a very great occasion for her, and the fluttered air with which she answered Jennie's questions showed that she was unused to travel and to strangers alike.

It seemed so perfectly hopeless to try to direct any one who had no idea of the city, that Jennie in

despair put her into a hack and directed the hackman to take her to Mrs. Sylvester's house, paying for the ride, with a little grimace, out of her own pocket-book.

"That's missionary money, anyhow," she said to herself. "I have a great mind to take that out of my next subscription, for I am sure it is real missionary work to get that scared little woman to the place where she is going. I wouldn't like to have to entertain her, but I suppose this Mrs. Sylvester is some good missionary worker who will like her all the better for not having a single idea except upon the subject of missions."

Having dismissed the cab she dismissed the delegate from her mind also, and she had no further time to think of her, for she was so busy all day that she had plenty of opportunities to discover why her cousin thought it such an important piece of work.

"There," she said with a sigh as she turned away after the last train had come in and all the delegates had been assigned somewhere, "thank goodness, they are disposed of somehow! I have an uncomfortable consciousness that just as likely as not I have made a dreadful mix of the whole business and have put the round delegates in the square holes in some cases; but it was the best I could do, and angels couldn't do more. I won't tell Cousin Lettie my uncomfortable suspicions, lest it should completely prostrate her. It will be time enough for her tomorrow to undo my mischief if she can."

"How did you get along?" the invalid asked in weak tones, without opening her eyes, which were encircled with dark rings that showed how she was suffering.

"Finely, Cousin Lettie," Jennie answered, keeping her perplexities to herself until her cousin should feel better. "I have got them all disposed of, and two extra ones besides that made their appearance at the last moment. I have my suspicions that they only came down to the city to do some shopping, and as a matter of economy thought they would take in the missionary meeting so as to be entertained without the expense of a hotel bill, but we will see to-morrow. I may be doing them an injustice, so I will just step around to the meeting and see if they are there."

"Oh, Jennie, you make my head ache running on so," groaned her cousin, and Jennie kissed her with a self-reproachful, "There, I will hush up now," and went out of the room to rest after her day's work.

If her cousin had known that the shy country woman had been sent to Mrs. Sylvester's elegant home, and the honored Mrs. Tyler had been quartered in one of the plainest homes that had been offered for the reception of delegates, she would most heartily have concurred in Jennie's opinion that she had put round delegates into square holes; but knowing nothing of the confusion that had been wrought in her carefully laid plans, she went to sleep

thinking that in spite of her headache her work had been done.

If she could have known the end of the story just then, she would have seen that the rearrangement of her plans had been ordered by higher wisdom than her own, and the results would be far better than she could have hoped for.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONSEQUENCES.

MRS. SYLVESTER had been told who her guest was to be, and when the name was announced she went down to the parlor expecting to greet the Mrs. Tyler whom she had often seen and still more often heard about in connection with missionary meetings. Self-possessed as she was, she nearly started with surprise when she entered the parlor and saw her guest standing uncomfortably in the middle of the room, evidently too shy to sit down on one of the handsome chairs without a special invitation.

"Mrs. Tyler?" asked Mrs. Sylvester, with the faintest note of surprise in her interrogation. There surely must be some mistake in the name, for this was not the Mrs. Tyler whom she had been led to expect.

"Yes, ma'am, that's me," said her guest with a queer little bob of a courtesy. "It's very kind in you to invite me to your house, and I hope I won't make you any extra trouble. I hope you won't make company of me."

This was the little speech she had planned to make to her hostess, for she had said to her daughter before she left home, "It will be too bad now for these

people that are going to entertain the delegates to go to a whole lot of trouble and make great company of us. I am going to tell them just not to make any company of me, but let me take pot-luck. The meetings will be treat enough for me."

When she saw the elegant Mrs. Sylvester, looking like a queen, as she told Almira afterwards, in her trailing robes of black, she did not venture to say anything about pot-luck, but she did carry out her determination to tell her not to go to any trouble on her account. Although Mrs. Sylvester was dismayed at the idea of entertaining a guest who would of necessity be very uncongenial, she was too much of a lady to let the slightest trace of her real feelings appear, and she tried to make her guest feel at home by greeting her as pleasantly as if she had indeed been the Mrs Tyler she had looked for.

She looked forward to meal-times with considerable apprehension, for what should she talk about to this guest who had no interest in anything that concerned her? She soon found that she need not give herself any anxiety upon this score, for her kindly greeting had made the shy little woman feel so comfortable that she never doubted for a moment but that she was as welcome as she would have made Mrs. Sylvester in her own home, and she chatted away freely, interesting Mrs. Sylvester in spite of her sorrowful preoccupation by the glimpses of the quiet, simple life which she unconsciously revealed. It was the first time she had been away from home

since the little trip she took with her husband when they were married, and that was "nigh on to twenty years ago, now," as she said. It was so evidently a most delightful occasion to her that Mrs. Sylvester rather forgot herself in trying to make her enjoy it as much as possible.

"I suppose you are too tired to go out to the meeting this afternoon?" Mrs. Sylvester said, as they rose from the lunch table.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't miss one of these meetings for anything," said Mrs. Tyler, so energetically that Mrs. Sylvester congratulated herself that she would not have to entertain her guest that afternoon at any rate.

"It must be a great privilege to live here in the city where you can go to so many missionary meetings," said Mrs. Tyler.

A faint smile crept over Mrs. Sylvester's face. It had been so long since she had cared to go anywhere that it amused her to think of going to missionary meetings being considered a privilege.

"I am afraid it is like most other privileges which are so common one undervalues them," she said.

"I'll enjoy going with you so," said Mrs. Tyler, looking at her hostess with wide open blue eyes, which were full of honest admiration of the slender graceful woman who was so different from any of the people that the country woman had ever met. It seemed like a little bit of heaven to be so graciously entertained in such a beautiful house. If

Mrs. Sylvester had known it, it was the very brightest time in all Mrs. Tyler's life, and one upon which she never ceased to dwell, insensibly magnifying her pleasure every time she spoke of it, until it seemed almost impossible that she had ever really had such a wonderful time.

Mrs. Sylvester's face fell. She must draw the line somewhere, and with all her kind feelings toward her simple guest she could not martyrize herself by going to this meeting with her. She had lost her interest in missions, for one thing, though there had once been a day when she had cared so much about them that she had consecrated her oldest son to the work of telling others the gospel story. It would be an intolerable weariness to go with this enthusiastic guest, and listen all the afternoon to women who found keen pleasure in hearing the reports of work accomplished. She was not in accord with the spirit of the meeting, so she would stay away.

"I hardly think I will go myself," she said, rather hesitatingly, for she did not like to disappoint her guest. "I think I can direct you so that you will surely find the church without any trouble. It is not very far from here; or better yet, I will send for a carriage, and tell the driver to wait for you, so that there will not be any possibility of losing your way."

A cloud of disappointment came over Mrs. Tyler's face.

"I am so sorry you aren't going," she said. "I thought it would be so nice and homelike to go with

you, for I feel as if I knew you so well already, though I have known you really but a few hours. I want to go to the meeting, and of course I must go, seeing I've been sent to tell all the rest of our folks about it; but it won't be the same thing going by myself."

A sudden thought made her flush up to her ears with rosy color.

"I never thought," she said deprecatingly. "Of course you don't care about going with me. I know I'm not like the folks you go with. I'm old-fashioned even at home, where they don't pretend to keep up to the new ways; and my daughter was saying this morning that if there had only been time she would have seen to it that I had something fit to wear. I will go by myself, but you needn't go to the trouble of a carriage. I can walk just as well, and if I should lose my way, I dare say there'll be plenty of people to put me on the right track again."

Mrs. Sylvester was honestly distressed to think that her guest should for a moment imagine that she objected to be seen with her, and when she found that she could not disabuse her mind of the idea by protestations, she promptly resolved to go rather than have such a suspicion have any place in her thoughts.

She felt strangely out of place when she entered the church with her companion, where all was a delightful bustle of greeting and inquiry. Every one

seemed so happy, and all the happiness had gone out of her life. She had nothing left to live for now.

It was almost time for the meeting to begin, and soon the grand strains of the old Coronation hymn echoed triumphantly through the arches of the church.

Many an interesting meeting had been held in that church, but all agreed that this was one which was unusually full of absorbing interest. One could not be indifferent and unimpressed when such reports came from the outskirts of the work. There had been almost a Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit in some places, and there was not a heart in the house that did not thrill as the words of thanksgiving and gratitude were read from the workers in the field.

At last the secretary arose with her summary of the year's work and the statement of its needs.

"I want to tell you what some of our gifts cost," she said; and holding up the ugly ill-shaped mitten with the hole burned in it, which had been dampened by Aunt Judy's tears of disappointment, she told the little story of self-denial and self-sacrifice of one who might indeed have been forgiven for thinking that she had nothing to give, with a rare eloquence that brought tears to many eyes.

Then she spoke of the needs of the work, of the necessity that was laid upon all to give until they felt it, until their gifts cost actual self-denial, if the harvest which was white already should be gathered

in. In one school the brave young teacher had died in the harness. As long as she could speak she had taught others the way of life, and when she realized that death had come so close to her that she could feel its chill shadow, she wrote home, not grieving over the life which had been laid down so freely in service for others, but exulting in the thought that she had been accepted as a worker if even for such a short time, and her only sorrow seemed to be that the work must be left without helpers for a time.

"Is there no one here who can give herself to this work?" asked the speaker. "It is the most important post, perhaps, of all our mission work, and every day that is lost may do harm that after labor cannot make up. That poor old woman in her desolate cabin has given royally. Shall we give less to our King? Is there not some one here who is fitted by nature and education for the work, who can come to the rescue in this hour of need?"

At the close of her address she suggested a short season of silent prayer, that each one might re-consecrate herself and her powers and possessions to the work which had such great needs; and in that quiet time a new resolve stirred in Mrs. Sylvester's heart which had been so benumbed with sorrow that she had had no room in it for any other interests since the grave closed over her boy. The work that she had considered her life work, that of training her boy to a useful manhood, had been taken away from her. Should she not give the remaining years of her

life to this work which needed helpers so much, and take up this new work which had been brought to her notice with such earnestness? As she listened and reflected, with deepening interest, the plan seemed to promise relief to her burdened heart. The path of duty became clear.

It was no sudden impulse of which she might afterward repent, but a solemn purpose, that made her pledge herself to work in that distant mission-field.

Aunt Judy lies under the pines in that quiet forest in Virginia, and her patient tired hands are at rest, but her work still goes on. The impulse which her self-denial gave to the work which she loved, although she knew but so little of its needs, will go on for years after she has been forgotten. It was like a stone which cast into a pool of water makes ever-widening circles, until they reach the very banks. Only eternity itself can contain the ever-widening circles of an influence for good.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

UNEXPECTED HELP.

CHRISTIE found that it was a much harder matter than she had supposed it would be to win any sympathy for the factory girls or any help in her plans for them. She found that the general opinion concerning them was that they were not worth any effort, and that hopeless of making things any pleasanter, it would be a good thing for the town if they should leave it. Mrs. Bateman was in sympathy with her, as she always was with any plan to do good; but Christie spoke to one after another about her desire to help the girls without receiving the least encouragement. "If you only knew them as well as we do!" one lady exclaimed. "You have only been here a little while, Mrs. Stanley, and so you have not had the experience with them that we have had or you would not want anything to do with them either."

"I used to have a good deal to do with the girls who worked in a factory at my old home," Christie responded, remembering the encouraging results from the work among the factory operatives in Weston. "At first we had a Sunday-school for them down in Factoryville, as the place was called where most of

the hands lived, and then we started a cooking and sewing-school, and they were both very successful. I am sure it would be worth while to try to help the girls here."

"I am ever so sorry to disoblige you about anything," answered the lady, "but indeed I am thoroughly out of patience with those girls, and they have a better time than they deserve, I have no doubt. You are too kind-hearted, Mrs. Stanley."

Christie had quite determined that she would not be discouraged, if she had to work single-handed, but she was very anxious to have some help in the matter, so that more could be accomplished than she herself could do alone.

"Perhaps the trouble is that I don't go to work the right way to interest people," she said to Mrs. Bateman, after a round of calls in which her project had been discouraged at every place where she had introduced it. "I don't know whom to go to for help now, and I have about made up my mind that I must go to work alone and depend upon you for sympathy."

"I wish I could give you a little more substantial help than sympathy," Mrs. Bateman responded. "You know how impossible it is for me to undertake any outside duty, however. Now I am going to surprise you with a suggestion. Have you been to Mrs. Bush yet?"

"Indeed I haven't," Christie responded. "She is the very last person that I would go to for help

about anything. All her energies would be devoted to throwing cold water upon any project, and I can be sufficiently discouraged without going to her. She has such a very rough way of expressing her opinions, which are anything but pleasant usually in themselves, that it is a real trial to me to have to call upon her. I usually contrive to take Mr. Stanley with me for protection, for I do believe she stands a little in awe of him, though she delights in trying to shock him every now and then. Indeed I don't think she has a kind heart at all, Mrs. Bateman. I believe it is just your own kindness of heart that makes you think that she has. I have never seen any evidence of it yet, and I must confess I don't expect to."

"You don't know her as well as I do," Mrs. Bateman said, smiling at Christie's earnestness. "She can be just as kind as any one else can be, though I admit that she usually hides her better nature under a rough exterior. She is not a Christian, yet she has some humane feelings. I am sure she does not mean to hurt people's feelings by her blunt speeches, but she is not very sensitive herself, and so she doesn't know how her sharp remarks sting and rankle sometimes. I really think she would be inclined to help you in this matter, for I have heard her stand up for the factory girls quite warmly sometimes when other people have been blaming them. I would tell her what you want to do at any rate, and she can only refuse you if she will not help, and I fancy you are

willing to run the risk of a rebuff if there is any chance of success."

"Indeed I am," Christie replied. "I must admit that I don't think that there is the least chance of success; but just to please you—or shall I say to prove to you that I am right?—I will ask her to help me, and we shall see what she will do."

"I hope that she will prove that I am right," Mrs. Bateman answered, "for I know that for the sake of having her help you would be willing to be proven in the wrong. I was so glad to hear from the doctor that Miss Allison is improving so fast—to change the subject a little. You were a dear little woman to think of asking her to come and stay with you. I did want to so very much, but auntie was not feeling as well as usual and I did not dare undertake the care of two invalids. I was worrying over her, and thinking that because the way was not clear for me to take her she would not be provided for in any other way. I forgot that she was one of the Lord's children, and that he could provide for her without my help, though I wanted to have that privilege. That little change that you are giving her, the change from her lonely life in a boarding-house to becoming a member of a home circle for a time, is something that money could not buy for her. Even if some one had given her the money to go away somewhere for a trip, she still would have had that lonely, desolate feeling that she had no place in the world and that no one wanted her. I know what a pleasure it has

been to her to have been invited to your home, and the very fact that you were a stranger to her and yet were so willing to open your home to her has been a very precious experience to her of God's love and care for her. The mere gift of money to meet her needs would not have been half as much to her as your thoughtfulness and kindness. She is regaining strength and health now, and has lost the despondency which made her feel as if she could never make up for lost time. Money would not have made her as rich as her renewed ambition. There is a little thought of Ruskin's that has often been a great comfort to me when I have been inclined to lament that my sympathy for people in distress could not take the form of money. He says, 'It is not written, Blessed is he that feedeth the poor, but he that considereth the poor. A little thought and a little kindness are often worth more than a great deal of money.' I have proved it true very often and I believe that people appreciate real sympathy and consideration quite as much as they do more material help, even though the latter may be indispensable too. At all events, in Miss Allison's case you can have the pleasure of knowing that you are giving her something that money could not purchase."

"I do not think that I have often had a greater pleasure," Christie answered. "She does seem to enjoy everything so much, and appreciates every little attention that one shows her. She is a very

bright, companionable girl too, and I really enjoy her society. It worries me sometimes to think that I get the credit for doing a very kind thing when really it has only been a pleasure to me all through. I do hate to be thought good when I am only having a good time myself."

"Well, your good times take a little more unselfish form than most people's," laughed Mrs. Bateman. "So you must submit to being misunderstood sometimes and overestimated. I understand your feeling about it though. I think that when we do things for the Master he always lets us enjoy the full blessedness of giving, which really is greater than that of receiving."

"Well, I must go at once, though it is always so hard to leave you when I so seldom have a chance for a little chat with you," Christie said, rising reluctantly. "I will go and see Mrs. Bush before I go home, for I am afraid that my courage will fail me if I wait to think about it. I know I am a coward, but I am positively afraid of her, she says such trying things. I am always afraid that I shall either get in a temper or cry, either of which would not be very dignified for a minister's wife. I haven't much faith in her willingness to help either, or I should go more willingly, but I won't give up without an effort."

"I wish you all success," Mrs. Bateman said, as she went to the door with Christie and saw her start toward Mrs. Bush's house, walking along hastily

as if she feared her determination might forsake her if she waited. Fortunately for her errand, as well as for her comfort during the call, Mrs. Bush was in one of the gracious moods which she sometimes assumed, and in which she was not at all formidable.

Christie broached her errand as bravely as she could, and asked Mrs. Bush whether she would not be willing to help in trying to start a library to which the factory hands could have access, and which would help them to some better and higher pleasures than they had at present.

"Well, I am glad that some one has waked up to the fact that there is a lot of home mission work lying neglected right here at our doors," said Mrs. Bush energetically. "When folks come bothering around me to go to the foreign missionary society and to give to the heathen I have no patience with them. I don't believe in doing work a thousand miles away when there is plenty to do at one's own door. I declare I believe there are as many heathen here to the square mile as there are in the Sandwich Islands, and yet because they are civilized sort of heathen and wear bangs and bracelets, no one seems to think that they are worth saving. I've always said that if the missionary society would undertake work that I could see any manner of sense in, I would be willing to do my share, and I mean to be as good as my word. I am glad that you don't believe in foreign missions either."

"Oh, but I do," Christie exclaimed quickly, in haste to correct Mrs. Bush's mistaken ideas concerning her views on the missionary question. "I believe in foreign missions too. It is a case of 'This ought ye to do and not leave the other undone.' I want to do the home work too though, and I think this is something that ought to be done."

"So do I," replied Mrs. Bush with remarkable unanimity. "I have always said that those girls weren't more than half to blame if they were noisy gadabouts. What else have they to do, poor souls, but walk around the streets in the evenings? I dare say some of the people who are the hardest on them wouldn't be a bit better if they had no better chance. Oh, it takes these good people to be real hard and uncharitable. I don't pretend to be pious, but I believe I've got more charity for those girls than some of the pillars of the church have. They hold their heads too high to look at them, and don't care what becomes of them. Well, what are your plans about the thing? How are you going to get the books?"

"I thought it would be very easy to get enough to start with by asking each person to give one book," Christie explained; "but I have failed to interest people as I thought I would, and I don't know now just how to go to work. What would you do?"

There was nothing that more delighted Mrs. Bush than having her advice asked, and as she was a shrewd, common sense, practical woman with a good

share of worldly wisdom, her advice was often very well worth asking.

"I'll tell you a good way to start the library," she said after a few moments' reflection; "that is if your husband will go into it. You would have to make it a kind of church affair to make it go as it ought to. Did you ever hear of a 'book social'?"

"No," Christie answered. "What is it?"

"You have a sociable, with refreshments of course, and some other entertainment if you like, and the price of admission is a book. If nothing is said about the books, why folks are just mean enough to take some old school-books or directories and pass them off; so it is a good plan to have the names of the books and their givers read aloud at the end of the evening. If people know that every one is going to know what they gave they will have a sort of pride about it, and will bring something nice just for the sake of their credit. Oh, you have to watch the charity givers, for they are just as tricky as other people. I have had experience with them, and I know."

Christie laughed in spite of herself.

"Well, may be you think that it isn't so," Mrs. Bush went on, "but I have had more to do with them than you have, and I know what I am talking about. Well, this is what I should suggest: You get up some sort of a literary entertainment, and then ask the ladies if they will furnish refreshments for a sociable. Make a fuss over it as if it was going to be a grand

affair, and get your husband to give it out from the pulpit, and I'll warrant you that you will get enough books for quite a library. Where are you going to keep the books when you get them?"

"I wish we could have a room for a library," Christie answered, really enjoying Mrs. Bush's enthusiasm. "I don't know of any that we could get without renting it, and there isn't any money yet for expenses; so I suppose I shall have to keep the books at my house, and let the girls come there for them, though it isn't half as good a way as having a place for them where they could have a chance to go and spend a quiet evening in reading if they wanted to, and where they could go to get their books without being afraid of making any trouble. I am afraid that they won't feel as free about coming to take the books out if they are kept in some one's house."

"No, you are right, they won't," said Mrs. Bush very decidedly. "That way won't answer at all."

"What else could I do?" asked Christie, rather dismayed at having her plan so decidedly vetoed.

"I'll tell you what I will do, just for the sake of having things as they ought to be," Mrs. Bush answered after a moment's consideration. "I own a store down in that neighborhood, and there is a very decent loft over it that I only use to store some things in that. I could keep somewhere else just as well. You can have that for a library and reading-room, and that will give them a place to go where they won't feel as if they were in any one's way, or

being watched and listened to all the time. Of course I don't mean that they are to do whatever they have a mind to, for they are too wild to be trusted that way, and the next thing we would know would be that they were using it for a dancing-hall, with the books piled up for a stage for the orchestra. Then you would have the pillars more down on the whole thing than ever. We have got to look out for them. I suppose you are a pillar yourself, come to think of it," she said, suddenly remembering that she was classing Christie with herself as being quite outside of the list of "pillars," as she called them, who were the leading members of the church. "Never mind, I'll wager I was worth more than all the pillars put together in this case, wasn't I?" she asked.

"Indeed you have been a very substantial pillar for me to lean upon in this emergency," laughed Christie. "It is so good in you, Mrs. Bush, to give that room for the books. It will be just the thing, and I did so wish that we could have a room for them, and yet I was afraid to hope for it, it seemed so perfectly impossible at first. You are just as kind as you can be."

It hardly seemed possible to her that this was the same woman whom she had feared asking to help about the library. No one could have been kinder, and hers was really the first practical assistance that had been promised. If only every one else would respond as generously there would be no doubt that the library would be an accomplished fact.

"If you will come up here for me to-morrow, we will walk down and look at the room and see what it needs to be ready for use. It has never been used for anything but storage, but the walls and ceiling are finished, and I think it is in pretty good condition."

Christie gladly promised to come, and thanking Mrs. Bush again very warmly for her kindness she started homewards, feeling very much cheered by this unexpected help.

She went a little out of her way to stop at Mrs. Bateman's and tell her of her success.

"Well, how did you succeed?" asked Mrs. Bateman, though she read the answer before she asked the question in Christie's radiant face.

"She was just as kind and nice as she could be," Christie replied. "I don't see what makes her so disagreeable sometimes when she can be so very nice if she only chooses to be. She has promised to help me, gave me some very good suggestions, and best of all has actually promised to give us a large room over a store in that neighborhood to use for a library! I had no idea that she could be so agreeable, and I don't feel a bit afraid of her now. I suppose she will snap me up before long, so that I shall be just as afraid of her as ever, but I shall never believe again that she has not a kind heart."

"I am glad that I proved a true prophet," said Mrs. Bateman. "I was pretty sure that you would find her willing to do what she could, and I think

when people take it for granted that she will be willing to do her part that she seldom disappoints them. She is peculiar, I will admit. The simile of the chustnut-burr holds very true in her case. I am glad she is going to help you, for she will do it with all her heart as she does everything else."

Christie had begun to feel quite discouraged at her want of success, but finding this ally where she had least looked for help gave her new courage, and she went home to plan with her husband the details of the "book sociable."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A SUCCESSFUL EVENING.

THE MANSE had never looked more pleasant and inviting than it did that evening when Mr. and Mrs. Stanley were expecting the Bible-class of young men to spend the evening. The boys had been a little uncertain about accepting the invitations which came to them through the mail, as carefully worded as if they had been addressed to any gentlemen in the place.

It had been an agreeable surprise to them to receive the dainty envelopes, and to two at least of the boys the invitation had the charm of being the first missive that they had ever received through the mail.

"I wonder what it means anyhow?" queried Dick Ludlow, a rather stupid-looking boy, as he turned the letter over and over in his clumsy fingers, as if he expected to find something that would explain Mrs. Stanley's intentions concealed on the back of the envelope.

"It means that they want the pleasure of our society," answered Ned Harman, a brighter boy, who was smoking a cigarette in a way that he thought was exceedingly mannish. "It's the first time I

ever heard anything about the pleasure of my society. Most folks seem to think that it's anything but a pleasure, and are quite willing to get along without it. I wonder what's up, anyhow!"

"The best way to find out is to go and see, I'm thinking," said another member of the group, who had sauntered down from the pool-room when the mail was opened, more from the force of habit than because he ever expected or received any mail. "I expect the parson can't get at us as well as he would like to in Sunday-school, and so he thinks he will ask us to the house, and then he will have his own way with us."

"Are you going?" asked Dick Ludlow of the last speaker.

"I don't know. I will go if all the rest of you do, but I surely won't go by myself," was the answer.

"It seems kind of mean not to go when we got such polite invites," said Ned Harman. "We had better go, and then if we don't like the way things are going we can leave. I don't think Mr. Stanley is the kind of man to ask us there as if he just wanted us to spend the evening and meant all the time to preach at us. I like him, if he is a minister. I say give him a chance anyway, and let us see what he wants us for. That's only fair."

"I don't say he means to preach at us," interposed a boy who had not spoken hitherto. "But he's so in the habit of it that I don't suppose he can help it

exactly. He will begin without knowing it, and then we will be in for an evening of it. I say don't go."

Mr. and Mrs. Stanley would have been surprised and not altogether complimented if they had heard the discussion over the acceptance of the invitations, but at last it was decided by the majority that it was only fair to go and see what was wanted of them, and then if they did not like it they need never go again.

"I wonder what we ought to do about telling them that we are coming," said Ned Harman, who had some sense of the proprieties which should be observed.

"Oh, they will find out fast enough when they see us coming," Dick answered. "We will all go together and keep each other company."

All the boys agreed that they would rather go together, as Dick suggested, and on the appointed evening they met at the corner of the street below the Manse and went along the rest of the way together. They had no time to feel shy after their footsteps were heard upon the porch, for Mr. Stanley threw open the door without waiting for them to ring the bell and gave them a very cordial welcome.

As they took off their hats and coats and went into the parlor, Mrs Stanley met them with equal warmth, and not even Dick Ludlow could doubt that his company was a pleasure to both host and hostess. It was a very pleasant evening, and one that

was a new experience in the lives of these boys. They were not used to being wanted, nor to having any special effort made to entertain them, and although they were, as Mr. Stanley had anticipated, almost too shy to feel fully at ease, yet the evening was one that would linger in their memories for a long time to come.

With games, photographs of interesting places, and some music, the evening came to a close all too soon, and Christie's cake and coffee were very much appreciated as the closing part of the entertainment. Miss Allison did her best to help amuse them, and before the clock struck ten most of the boys had lost the self-consciousness which had embarrassed them at the beginning of the evening, and were having a delightful time. They grew better acquainted with their pastor and teacher than they could have done in months of the formal intercourse in the Sunday-school, and on his part he felt as if he had learned more of their dispositions and of what they needed than he could have done in any other way. It was with genuine reluctance that the boys rose to go, and each one as he said "good-night" assured his host and hostess that he had enjoyed the evening very much.

"That was an experiment that I shall enjoy repeating," Mr. Stanley said, as the door closed after the last of the boys. "It was work that paid, for all the stiffness and shyness that keeps me from getting very near the boys wore off, and I think I can teach

them better next Sunday for having met them in this informal way this evening."

A week later Christie invited her guests.

She had sent out her invitations several days beforehand, and the girls looked forward to the evening with delightful anticipations, for Nellie had assured them that "Mrs. Stanley was just too lovely for anything," and they usually accepted her opinions without demur. Christie was very happy in the pleasure of her guests. There were some who would not have been prepossessing at all but for the interest she felt in them, but there were others toward whom she felt quite drawn and of whom she was glad to think that she would know more. Mrs. Bush had asked to come that evening, and somewhat to Christie's surprise the blunt manner which tried her so in that lady proved quite attractive to the girls, and they got on very well with her.

"Why, if those girls had the chances that our daughters have they would be just about as nice a set of girls," she said enthusiastically at the end of the evening. "I haven't any patience with people who act as if they weren't fit to speak to. I am going to take hold and help you all I can in anything you want to do for them, just to show folks how much they are mistaken."

All that was best and most lovable in Mrs. Bush's character seemed to show itself in her intercourse with these girls. She was blunt and outspoken it is true, but she did not say anything that was cal-

culated to wound their feelings, and they received any suggestion she made to them in the kindly spirit in which it was meant.

"You have helped me very much," Christie said when Mrs. Bush took her departure, after all the other guests had gone. "The girls enjoyed themselves ever so much more because you were here, and you have been very kind."

"You are beginning to think my bark is worse than my bite, are you?" asked Mrs. Bush good-naturedly, for she had been quite aware that Christie had been half-afraid of her and that she had been considerably annoyed by her plain speeches.

"I think it is too bad that you try to keep people from finding out how kind you really are," Christie responded. "I feel as if I was just getting acquainted with you, although I have known you all these months."

It really seemed to her as if she had made a new friend, instead of just having begun to understand an old one, for every day discovered to her some of the good points that lay hidden away beneath the prickly speech and blunt manners.

The plans for the book social progressed vigorously, aided by Mrs. Bush's practical suggestions, and Christie began to feel sure that it would make a certainty of the library scheme.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FULFILLMENTS.

"EVERYTHING has been as perfect as it could be," Christie exclaimed triumphantly, as she looked at the table laden with well chosen, interesting books, which were the result of the book social. The idea of a book social was a novel one in Warrensville, and it had been presented to the people in such a way that they were all anxious to do their share for the honor of their church.

It had been easy to provide the entertainment, for there was plenty of local talent in the place, and they were very willing to volunteer. A sociable was a pleasant event, and the ladies were quite ready to provide refreshments, and no one felt burdened by the obligation to bring a book when such a pleasant evening was anticipated.

It had been a thoroughly successful evening, not only as far as the donation of books was concerned, but in the matter of enjoyment, and Christie was too delighted at its conclusion to remember that she was very tired. Mrs. Bush had been almost equally pleased, especially as the suggestion had been hers, and when she bade Christie good-night she told her that they would soon get to work now, fixing up the loft for a pleasant reading-room.

The very next morning she came with the key, attended by a man to lift the heavy articles that had been stored there, and Christie went with her to the room. It was a very large well-lighted room, with a good floor and rough finished walls, which Mrs. Bush said she would have painted, as a painter had been owing her a year's rent for a long time, and she would be glad to have a chance to have him work it out as well as to make the room more inviting. The floor was to be stained a dark brown, and a very plain but serviceable table was made by putting long boards upon trestles and fastening them in position. The rough appearance of this table was concealed by a red canton flannel covering, Christie went to her tenth-box to procure.

The shelves upon which the books were to be kept until book-cases could be provided were plain pine boards, which received a coat of walnut stain, and simple turkey red curtains served the double purpose of keeping the dust from the books and making a cheery bit of color in the room. Various odd chairs had been begged for the room, and with these and a hanging lamp the furnishing had to stop, since Christie's purse was empty and her resources exhausted.

Very much to her surprise the girls themselves came to the rescue. She would have been glad to give the room a really homelike and tasteful appearance, so that it would be an inviting place in which to pass the evenings, but she had to be content with

only necessaries. She told Nellie Lewis how much more she would have liked to add to the room before she opened it for the girls, and she was surprised and delighted when Nellie assured her that they would be very willing to do their part, and could easily afford to club together and buy some of the other things now that the main essentials had been provided.

The question of who should be put in charge was rather a puzzling one, as Christie agreed with Mrs. Bush that it would hardly be wise to leave them entirely to themselves, without the restraint of any older person, and yet it would be a great burden to any one who was not very much interested in the girls to be obliged to spend her evenings there. It would spoil the pleasure of the girls, as well, to feel that they were being watched; and just as Christie was beginning to grow really anxious over the matter it was happily decided for her. Mrs. Rowan offered to stay in the room in the evenings, assuring her that she would not feel it too great a task, and would be glad to do that much for the girls, whom she really desired to help.

Nothing could have been better than this arrangement, for the girls felt that she was one of themselves and would not have the same feeling toward her that they would have toward a stranger, and she would only be a restraint when restraint was needed, instead of interfering with the freedom of the room.

"We have nothing to do in the evenings after eight o'clock, so my husband and I will enjoy going around to the room, and the girls won't mind me as they would any one else."

The question thus happily settled, there was no further perplexity about the room, and it was given over for the girls' use. They decided that they would prefer to organize a society among themselves and collect dues for the use of the library, using this money for whatever might be needed in the room. They seemed so satisfied with this plan that Christie assented to it willingly, though it had at first been her idea to have the library a free gift to the girls. There was a great deal more that she would have liked to do for them, but she could only hope that in the future she might see paths opening for more extended usefulness among them.

There were some things that she could do by quiet personal influence, and whenever she could spare the time from her home duties she went among the girls, to show them that she was their friend and wanted to help them make the best of themselves.

Mrs. Bush was almost as warm a friend of the factory girls as Christie herself, and she was always glad of an opportunity to help them in any way. She was growing somewhat gentler, and in her admiration for her real generosity and kindness of heart, Christie could overlook the things that had grated upon her almost intolerably at first.

She enjoyed her own home all the more because

she had done something to make these homeless girls happier, and once a month she opened her doors to them and welcomed them cordially to all that was best and brightest in her home. Even in the brief intercourse that they had with her they learned that there was a better and a higher plane of living than any to which they had risen in the past, and almost insensibly to themselves they entertained higher ideals and were less noisy and coarse in their manners.

Nellie Lewis's heart had been won, and the proud, wilful girl was willing to let Christie mould her as she would. It seemed such a wonderful thing to her that any one whom she admired as much as she did the minister's young wife should actually care to have her, one of the factory girls, for a friend, and should want to help her. She was an impulsive girl, and she loved Christie with all her heart. Christie's slightest suggestion was eagerly carried out and her wishes were gratified as soon as they were expressed, for Nellie delighted in opportunities of showing her devotion.

It was Christie's great wish that her first love might be given to a Friend who was kinder than any human friend could ever be, but she felt that she must only guide the impetuous girl in the right direction without urging her to come to a decision to be a Christian, lest in her eagerness to gratify her friend she should want to unite with the church without having given her heart to the Saviour. Christie

felt sure that she would do good work among her companions if she once became a Christian, and she prayed earnestly for her that the day might soon come when she would be drawn to Christ by the constraining power of his love.

Mrs. Bush was drawing nearer to the kingdom, and it seemed as if she was becoming permeated with the "charity which suffers long and is kind," and which "thinketh no evil," and in trying to help others was being brought nearer to Christ herself.

Christie found her heart and hands full to overflowing with all her work, while she was continually tempted to undertake new duties because she saw so many opportunities around her.

"There is so much to do!" she sighed to herself, half wearily, as she exerted every power of mind and body to do all that she had pledged herself to accomplish.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

MISTAKES.

"Oh, dear, I never knew anything so provoking," sighed Christie. "Everything all seems to come at once lately. I declare I don't know what to do nor what to leave undone." Her usually sunny face was clouded over, and she looked as if tears were very near her eyes. It was Monday, to begin with, and it had brought with it all the extra work that generally follows the rest of Sunday. The dishes stood upon the table as they had been left after breakfast, the clothes were in the tubs soaking, the fire was nearly out, and the clock pointed to the hour of twelve.

Christie always cleared up the table Monday mornings, washed the dishes, prepared the lunch, and did the thousand and one little things that fall to a housekeeper's lot on this day of the week. But since Miss Allison had been staying with her she had insisted upon relieving Christie of her Monday morning cares, and she was very glad to relinquish them, as she always had on hand enough outside work to fully occupy her time.

This was the first Monday she had been without Miss Allison, and she had not realized how much she

would miss her. There had been certain arrangements about the girls' room that she wanted to attend to, and although it was work that she could have just as well have deferred to another day, yet she was so interested in it and so eager to attend to it that she went out as soon as breakfast was over and Howe had gone to his study, telling herself that she could do her household duties when she came back, for she would have plenty of time before the noonday meal.

She stayed longer than she expected to, and when she came home she was astonished and discouraged to find everything in chaos, and no sign of Hannah, the little maid of all work. She called her once or twice, suspecting that she might be standing out by the fence gossiping with one of the neighbor's girls, a proceeding of which she had sometimes been guilty.

There was no answer, and going to the back door and looking out, Christie saw that she was not in the yard.

"I wonder if she is sick," thought Christie, suddenly remembering that Hannah had been unusually pale that morning. She went up to her room, and found her in bed suffering from a severe sick headache. She had had such headaches before, and Christie knew that she would probably not be able to leave her bed that day, so she applied the usual remedies and went down-stairs again, leaving Hannah to sleep it off, while she tried to bring order out of chaos.

There was so much to do that Christie wondered forlornly where she should begin. She was tired from her exertions of the day before, for teaching the Sunday-school class was not a small matter and she always put her whole heart and soul into it, and although she was not aware of it, she had been overtaxing her strength for some time and was feeling a languor and indisposition to exertion that was very new to her. If she had known that Hannah was going to be sick she would not have gone out, and then by this time all her own work would have been done, and she could have done some of what Hannah had left undone without being hurried.

"I suppose I had better get the fire started so that I can get dinner," she said at last, rousing herself to action, and going out into the kitchen she donned a large gingham apron and went to work.

Every housekeeper knows how a kitchen stove can seem to exhibit as great depravity as if it was a reasonable being. It was all in vain that Christie poked it, and encouraged it with chips, and opened the draughts, and did everything she could to coax the fire to burn. It only smouldered, and would not give the least promise of burning up so that it would be ready for cooking.

Christie burned her hand with the hot lid as she was taking it off, and this seemed to her the crowning disaster of the day. She stopped everything else to wrap it up in a large bandage, that by its size represented the amount of discomfort the burn caused

her, and felt as if it ought to honorably exempt her from further household duty.

She envied Hannah in bed, even if she did have a headache. She was so tired and discouraged that she felt as if she would be willing to have a bad headache, if only she might rest.

"There is nothing to do but to start this fire all over again," she decided at last; and after twenty minutes' work she had a brisk clear fire.

It was almost the dinner hour, and not the first preparations for dinner had been made beyond starting the fire. Christie was fretted by the remembrance that she had left her bedroom to be attended to after she should come home, and she was too good a housekeeper not to be worried over the thought of an untidy room at that hour in the day.

"What shall I do first?" she cried again in despair, wishing that Howe was going out to dinner, so that she would not have to prepare the noonday meal in addition to everything else.

Evidently the dinner came first on the list of necessary things to be done, so she carried the dishes that had been used at breakfast out into the kitchen, resolving to leave them till afterwards, and began her preparations for the meal. Her thoughts were not pleasant ones as she prepared the vegetables. She did not realize at all that this growing depression that was so apt to hang about her, except just when she was elated over some success in her work, was the result of over-wrought nerves, and that she

had undertaken more than her strength would allow.

Just now she put her depression down to the failure to do all that she wanted to, and she had so many plans that she wanted to undertake and that she was sure would be successful and do good, that she almost wished that she and Howe were boarding again, so that she might have all her time to work in the church.

Everything had gone so smoothly at first in their home life, but of late there had been very much that she was not satisfied with. The exquisite neatness that had been a part of Christie's life and had characterized all her belongings was slowly vanishing, and she had begun to slight little things, as she found herself pressed for time to accomplish all that she had undertaken.

More than that, she imagined that Hannah was becoming careless, for the meals were not cooked and served as nicely as they had been at first, and Christie forgot that lately she had been so preoccupied that she had not looked after Hannah as she used to, and so it was only a natural consequence that everything showed the lack of the mistress's supervision. Everything was going wrong, and Christie felt as if she would heartily enjoy a good cry, if she only had time to take it.

It was quarter past the usual dinner hour when Howe came down from his study, wondering that he had not been summoned before by the ringing of the

dinner-bell. He cast a glance into the untidy bedroom as he passed by the open door, and the sight did not tend to soothe him. It had been a trying morning for Howe. He was always apt to feel a little reaction upon Monday morning from Sunday's strain, and the day before he had done more than usual, for he had taken a class in Sunday-school whose teacher was away, and had conducted a young people's prayer-meeting which he had lately organized. Besides the added fatigue, he had fallen into the hands of one of those well-meaning but exasperating persons who think it is their duty to tell their minister where he has failed, and the criticisms upon his manner of delivery, which Howe could not really feel were just, had nettled him and made him feel disposed to be irritable. He had wanted Christie's help during the morning, and coming down-stairs to find her, had found the house apparently given over to disorder—no Hannah and no Christie to be seen.

When he came down-stairs and found dinner late, the morning work undone, and Christie flushed and disconsolate in the kitchen with the breakfast dishes piled up on the table, while there was every indication that the meal would not be ready for some time yet, he did not feel in the mood to encourage her, as he would generally have done, but was under the impression that this was a legitimate occasion upon which to find fault.

"Are we going to have any dinner to-day?" he

asked with that air of a long-suffering martyr that is always trying to the best tempered of people.

If Christie had been in her usual frame of mind she would not have resented the query, but it just completed her annoyance.

"If I can ever get it ready," she answered with a tartness in her tone that Howe had never heard before.

"Where's Hannah?" he inquired.

"Sick," was Christie's laconic answer.

"Oh, I didn't know but that she might have some more important business on hand than attending to getting dinner," Howe answered. "Housekeeping seems to be the last thing that gets any attention in this house. Is there anything that I can do to hasten the prospect of dinner?"

"If you will go away and let me alone, perhaps I will get it ready some time," Christie retorted, and then as Howe took her at her word and walked out of the kitchen, she burst into tears.

She felt hurt to the very depths of her heart. It was the first time that things had been in such a forlorn condition and really afforded any great room for fault-finding, and that Howe had been so ready to blame her showed that he could not love her very much after all, she reasoned. He had not noticed the bandage upon her hand nor asked if she had hurt it. Christie felt as if she could never forget his indifference to her troubles, and the fact that when he might have condoned a little, he had been so ready

to blame. Strange perversity of human nature, to grieve those who love us best, and doubt their love! She forgot that he did not know that she had fully expected to get home in time to do all her usual tasks before dinner, and Hannah's sudden illness had been the principal thing that had upset all her plans and put everything behindhand so much. When people are out of humor they never remember any of the extenuating circumstances for another's misdeeds, and so as Howe and Christie were both predisposed to ill temper, they were neither of them in the mood to make any allowances for each other.

"The more haste the less speed."

Christie realized the truth of this old adage as she tried to hurry the dinner. When she put it on the table she was painfully aware that there was very much to be apologized for. The steak was scorched, the potatoes were not quite done, and there was not anything upon the table in its best condition.

Christie put it on, surveyed it gloomily, rang the dinner-bell, and then went up-stairs and threw herself down upon the bed and indulged in a hearty cry. Everything had gone wrong, and there was no use trying to make anything any better, for Howe did not love her and she should never be happy again!

CHAPTER XL.

EXPLANATIONS.

It was so unfortunate that their first quarrel should have come at a time when neither of them was in a frame of mind to make any excuse for the other or take the first step toward healing the breach. Howe came down-stairs to find the table deserted, and after waiting some time for Christie to make her appearance, concluded that she did not mean to come down, and began to eat his lonely meal in a decidedly bad humor. I am afraid in his frame of mind it would really have been a disappointment to him to find that there was nothing to complain of in the dinner. It was a sort of gratification to pronounce that the dinner was not fit to eat, and he pushed his plate back with his uneaten meal upon it and left the table feeling that he had been very badly treated.

He had some calls to make, and feeling too vexed to want to find Christie and make any atonement for his part in the quarrel, he put on his hat and went out, shutting the door with an emphasis that might justly be called a slam.

Christie heard the sound in her room, and went to the window and looked out. Perhaps he would turn

back before he reached the gate. It surely could not be possible that he would go out and leave her crying, when he had been so unkind to her.

He had really gone, though Christie watched him with the faint hope in her heart that he would turn back until he had turned the corner. Then she was too angry to want him to turn back, and drying her eyes, which were too hot for tears now, she began to do her work, half feeling as if she could never love Howe again, since he was so selfish and so thoughtless of her feelings.

Very wrong? Yes, they were both very wrong, but they were only human beings, who were full of faults, and that they did not fail more often showed how hard they tried to do right.

It was a bright winter's day, but to Howe and Christie both the sun had gone under a cloud from which it did not seem as if it ever could emerge. This did not seem like an ordinary quarrel which could be made up. Both were very sure that their home happiness had been killed, and that nothing could ever restore it again, and each one blamed the other wholly for it.

Christie went about her work with a heart-ache and a headache as well, for she had not shed so many tears before since her childhood. She was too miserable to care about any dinner herself, but at last she remembered that Hannah had not had anything to eat, and she went down to fix something for her. Then she found out that Howe had not touched

his dinner, and her indignation burned more hotly than ever. Suppose it was not quite as nicely cooked as it might have been, could he not have eaten it just this once? He had left it just to make her feel more badly, she had no doubt, and if she had had the least appetite before, she had none at all now.

She cleared off the table and put things away without touching a mouthful, and then made a cup of tea and some toast for Hannah and took it up to her. She found that Hannah was much better, and had slept off the worst of her headache. In an hour after she had eaten her meal she came downstairs, pale yet, but able to do something. The washing of course would have to be left over to the next day, but Christie was glad to have her able to help with the dishes. She felt as if she was on the invalid list herself by this time, her head throbbed so wearily.

By the middle of the afternoon the house was all in order, and Christie had planned a particularly appetizing supper, not because she wanted to make up with Howe, but with a defiant feeling that he should not have any further reason for his ill-temper.

For the first time since she had been married she wanted to see her mother so badly that she felt as if she must go to her; but as that was wholly out of the question, she determined to put on her wraps and go and make a little call upon Mrs. Bateman, whom she had rather neglected of late, she had been so busy. The cordial greeting with which her friend welcomed her was very comforting to Christie's sore

heart, and when Mrs. Bateman insisted npon her occupying the lounge in the pretty sitting-room which had been Howe's study, and gently stroked her aching head, Christie's heart overflowed and she told her friend the trouble that seemed such a great one.

"You won't mind if I tell you where I think you have been making a mistake, will you, girlie?" asked Mrs. Bateman, stroking the soft hair and wishing that out of her own experience of life she might straighten all Christie's tangles.

"No indeed, I only wish you would tell me," Christie sobbed. "I just feel all tangled up, and if you could only straighten me out I should be so glad. I thought I was doing right, but I must have been doing wrong, or Howe would not have stopped loving me," and the tears came again.

"You silly child!" and Mrs. Bateman smiled in spite of herself. "Your husband loves you just as dearly as ever, and the fact that you both lost your tempers for once does not prove that you do not love each other with all your hearts. You are not going to let this little rift mar the melody of your lives, but you are going to see how it might have been avoided and learn a little lesson for the future. I have been wanting to warn you for some time of the danger of overdoing. I know there is a perfect fascination about planning work and then carrying it out; and when everything seems to be successful, and one is encouraged to enlarge her boundaries more and more, then comes the danger of spreading one's self

out too thin to do one's best work at every point. There is a limit to what one can do well, because there are limits to strength and time, and when we overstep these boundaries we do not do more good work really, we only do more work less well, and do ourselves and the work both injustice. You must find more helpers, dear, in your work, for no one can do all that you have planned out and attend to home duties besides, and you know those come first. You must calculate your time and strength carefully, and then estimate how much of them is due your home and your husband, for a wife's duties come with a homemaker's and must not be set aside for anything else. You can't do everything, dear, and you have planned out enough for three people. You are wearing yourself out, and I have been afraid you would break down completely trying to do so much. Now when you go home talk it over with your husband, and decide what work can best be put into the hands of others. Keep that which is most necessary for you to do, and then save the best of yourself for your home."

"But—" Christie stopped.

"But what, dear?"

"Promise me that you won't think that I am conceited," said Christie shyly.

"I will readily promise that," answered Mrs. Bateman.

"Well, I really don't see what I can give up," Christie said. "I know that sounds just exactly as

if I said that I thought I could do everything better than any one else, but I don't mean that. I know there are people who could do better than myself in everything, but I don't know who they are. I love my girls so much that I don't see how any one else could do just what I can for them. It isn't that others are not just as capable, only I love them more than any one else does. Then my infant-class, I couldn't give that up either, and it is just so with everything I do. I was very tired the other day and began to think that I never had a moment to myself any more and was getting fretful and easily worried, and I made up my mind to take some time for rest; but when I tried to find some time that I could spare, I decided that there was not anything that I could give up."

"But you will have to give up something soon," persisted Mrs. Bateman. "If you should make yourself sick, then you would have to lay everything down. Don't you think it would be wiser to stop before you have to?"

"It won't make me sick," Christie said. "You don't know how strong I am. I have scarcely been sick in all my life, and I am sure work will never make me sick. Still I do think I could do better work if I did not try to do so much, and I promise you that I will not undertake any more at any rate, and the next time I have to neglect anything it shall not be home duties. I feel so much better for having come to see you, Mrs. Bateman. I was so mis-

erable that I did not know what to do with myself when I came, and you have made me happier than I could have believed possible. I will make up with Howe as soon as he comes home, and I am sure we will never quarrel again. If it has made him as unhappy as it has made me, I am sure he will make the same resolution."

"I haven't any doubt of it," said Mrs. Bateman, as she kissed Christie good-bye. "Now, my dear, before you go, promise me that you will talk this matter of church work over with your husband, and see if there is not something that you can give up and put into others' hands with advantage to yourself if not to the work."

"I will talk it over," Christie promised, "but I am afraid that it won't do any good, Mrs. Bateman. I am just conceited enough to think that I can't be spared."

Christie had yet to learn that God's work can go on, no matter who is laid aside among his workmen.

CHAPTER XLI.

LAID ASIDE.

It was beginning to be dark when Christie left Mrs. Bateman, for at four o'clock on a winter's afternoon the early twilight begins to fall. She walked along hastily homeward, for she was eager now to see Howe and try to atone for her part of the disagreement. She would own that she had made a mistake and neglected the duty that came first for one that she preferred at the time, but she would explain to him that it was Hannah's unexpected illness that made everything so behindhand, not any forgetfulness of his comfort.

She would try to economize her time more after this, and show that she had time for all the church work she had undertaken and her home duties besides. There really was nothing that she could give up, as she had told Mrs. Bateman, for who else would love the work as she did and give her whole heart to it? and without whole-hearted service not very much can be accomplished. Perhaps it was with a pleasant sense of self-gratulation that Christie thought of the success that had attended all her efforts, and it may be that she unconsciously took the credit of it to herself, instead of attributing it to

God's blessing. It would have been a strange thing if she had not had a little sense of her own importance when she was surrounded by so much love and held so highly in esteem for her work's sake.

She saw her husband's tall figure in front of her as she turned into their street, and she hastened her steps that she might overtake him and tell him at once how sorry she was that she had spoken so hastily.

There had been a light fall of snow, and underneath the place where Christie stepped was a patch of ice whose slipperiness was only hidden but not removed by the snow upon it. Christie's foot slipped, and though she made a frantic effort to regain her balance, she fell headlong, striking her head against the edge of the pavement, while her foot doubled under her as she fell. She screamed involuntarily as she fell, and Howe recognized her voice and turned around at once. He was not in time to catch her, but he had her in his arms almost as soon as her head struck the sidewalk.

It was but a few minutes' work to carry her home and despatch frightened Hannah for the doctor, while Howe bathed Christie's head and did all he knew how to restore her to consciousness. Before the doctor drove up to the house Christie had opened her eyes, and her first conscious thought was of her husband, as her last one before falling had been a longing to meet him.

She stretched out her hand toward him feebly.

"Howe, I am so sorry!" she began, but he stopped her.

"It was all my fault, darling. I have been wretched ever since. Can you ever forgive me?"

Her smile and the pressure of her fingers were a sufficient answer, and then she shut her eyes again, for the pain in her head as well as in her limb made her feel faint and sick.

When Dr. Bateman examined the cut on her head he relieved Howe's fears by telling him that it was only a scalp wound, nothing as dangerous as it might have been and seemed at first. The sprain was the more serious of the two injuries, and might keep her confined to the house for a long time.

Mrs. Bateman came over as soon as her husband came home with the report of Christie's accident, and said she would stay until Christie had been made comfortable for the night and had gone to sleep. It was very pleasant to have the motherly touch of her friend undress her and make her comfortable, and Christie was so weak from the shock and pain that she did not give much thought to the extent of her injuries, but was glad to go to sleep as soon as possible.

She was surprised the next morning to find that moving was quite impossible, and the thought of her neglected duties distressed her more than the pain or the confinement.

"Oh, Howe, I cannot bear to stay in bed, just when I meant to show you what a good housekeeper I was going to be too," she cried, bursting into tears.

"Never mind about that, darling," said her husband. "That is the least part of it. I shall get along very well, and perhaps I may develop into a sufficiently good housekeeper to make you comfortable too; but it is the thought of your pain and confinement that I am distressed about. Don't you want to have your mother come and stay with you for a while? She has been promising to make us a visit this winter, and perhaps she could come now. I will write to her, for it might frighten her if I should telegraph."

"That will be lovely," Christie replied. "I won't mind being shut up half so much if I can have her to stay with me while you are out."

When the doctor came, Christie asked him how long it would probably be before she would be able to be about the house again.

The doctor hesitated.

"I wonder if I had better tell you," he said. "Will you promise me to be a brave little woman?"

"I will try to be, but that is the best I can promise," Christie replied.

"Well, it will be six weeks at the very least," the doctor said. "You see you have a very bad sprain, and a thing of that kind takes a long time to get well."

"Six weeks!" echoed Christie. "Oh, I never can waste six weeks lying still. Won't it be sooner than that?"

"Not any sooner, and if you are imprudent and

try to get around too soon, it will be a good deal longer," answered the doctor. "It needn't be wasted time though, my dear child. There are a great many lessons to learn that we can only learn when we are made to lie down in green pastures, and you won't find this wasted time if you use it right."

"But I have so much to do," Christie said tearfully.

"I know you have," the doctor answered. "But you will find that some of the work will wait for you, and the part that won't wait some one else will do. I know just how hard a lesson it is to learn that one can be spared when one leads an active life. There was a time in my life when I had the feeling that I was of a good deal of use in the world, and that certain objects in which I was interested couldn't do without me. It was very hard for me to find out that there were plenty of others who could step right into my place and fill it just as well if not better than I could. I am afraid at first I had the feeling that I would rather have had the work go undone than to have had any one else do it, but I had grace given me to get over that selfishness at last. When I was thoroughly convinced that I wasn't indispensable in the world I was allowed to take up my work again, but not before, and I have often thought since then that it was a very wholesome lesson, if not a very pleasant one."

"Were you taken sick?" asked Christie, forgetting her own troubles in this experience of the doctor's.

Christie's Home-Making. Page 372.

"Yes, I was laid up with inflammatory rheumatism all one long winter," the doctor replied. "I was not only of no use to any one else, but I was a burden to my family, and I have no doubt that I did a good deal to develop the graces of self-denial and patience in them, for which they may not have been properly grateful at the time. I suffered a good deal, and then I was very impatient because confinement was particularly irksome to me. I had to stay in that sick bed till I learned to be patient and submit to what the Lord thought was best for me, and when I had learned that I was allowed to get well. I know just how hard it is, my dear child, and I sympathize with you with all my heart. If I could hurry up matters I would gladly do it, but this is a case where you will have to let patience have its perfect work. Remember this,

'They also serve who only stand and wait.'"

"But it's the hardest kind of work," said Christie.

"Isn't that the kind that you really want to do for the Master?" asked the doctor. "I know you want to serve him perfectly. It is only because you think that you can do more for him in active service that you feel as if this time would be wasted. Now try and remember that he has sent you this work of bearing suffering and confinement patiently instead of the work you would have chosen for yourself. You have shown how a Christian can glorify him by service and spending every power and talent in his

work, now show how a Christian can glorify him through suffering and enforced inactivity. I know it is easier to preach than to practice, but I have had to practice too, so I know what I am talking about."

"I'll try," said Christie, trying to keep back her tears. "Only six weeks seems so long."

"That is because you are not used to sickness," the doctor answered. "Suppose it was six months or a year, or more, as it often is. You would have more reason for feeling as if you could not bear it in such a case. Now I must go away and take some bad news to another patient."

"If you give him as much help in bearing it as you have given me," Christie answered, "I am sure he will be braver than I have been."

CHAPTER XLII.

NEW WORKERS.

As soon as Christie's mother heard of her accident she started at once to her daughter, and Christie was so glad to see her that she laughingly declared that she was not sorry she had come to grief, as long as her accident had brought her such a welcome visitor.

Although Christie was weak and felt shaken and bruised from her fall, while her sprain gave her a good deal of actual pain, yet the first two days of her confinement passed so pleasantly that she did not feel at all like rebelling at it. Everything in the house went along as smoothly as if she had been about, for Hannah was on her very best behavior, and then Christie's mother was at the helm, so things could not go wrong nor show the absence of the mistress from her place of general manager.

It was not until Thursday morning that Christie began to worry about the various outside duties that she must leave to others.

"What shall I do about my Sunday-school class?" she said in despair to Howe, after she had silently pondered the matter for some time without being able to think of any one whom she felt would try to

make the lesson as interesting and helpful as she herself tried to make it. It was not an easy question to answer, for the infant-class is the hardest class in a Sunday-school to supply with a teacher, and the most critical class, unless it may be a young men's Bible-class. Christie had begged to be allowed to teach it at home, and have the children come to the house, but the doctor very decidedly vetoed any such proposition.

"It isn't to be thought of for a moment," he said. "You are not strong enough, and you would get feverish and over-tired, and put yourself back more than the rest of all the other days of the week could remedy. You must get some one to take your place."

It was of no use to plead, for the doctor could be very peremptory when he thought best to differ with his patients.

"I suppose you know best," said Christie with a sigh.

"Of course I do," said the doctor with a smile; "I am quite sure about that. Don't think for an instant of setting your opinion up against mine, for it would be perfect folly."

"Well, please listen a moment to what I am going to say," said Christie. "I want to tell you this. It might be better for some of your patients to keep quiet if they were in my condition, but it is different with me. It really is."

"How so, I should like to know," asked the doctor with a smile.

"I am so interested in my class, and it will be such a disappointment to me to give them up, that it seems to me that the disappointment and the fretting over it will be a great deal worse for me than overdoing a little would be. I suppose I would get a little too tired perhaps, but then I would feel so comfortable about my class that I think the peace of mind would more than make up for the fatigue. Don't you agree with me?"

"No, I can't say that I do, although that is quite an ingenious argument," the doctor answered. "In the first place, you wouldn't have strength to talk to the children for five minutes if I should let them come, Mrs. Stanley; and, besides that, the excitement would be so very bad for you that I should prefer to have you have the anxiety over your class, if you must have one or the other. But I don't think you ought to worry about them. They will do very well without you for a few Sundays, and will enjoy you all the more when they get you back again"

Christie knew it was of no use to say any more, but she lay back on her pillow and wiped away the tears that would come, feeling as if she was very hardly used. It was her first experience of even the slightest illness, and she could not get used to the thought that she would have to give up her own plans for awhile and submit patiently to inaction. She was surprised to find how strong her temptation was to be fretful and unreasonable. Her nerves were all on edge, and it was almost intolerable to her

to be obliged to ask even such a loving and attentive nurse as her mother for everything that she wanted. Only those who have always been well and used to gratifying all their wishes as quickly as they are conceived, and then are laid aside and compelled to ask for all that they helped themselves to hitherto, can understand how irksome helplessness is.

Although Christie tried to be patient and not ask for more than she really needed, so as not to make too many extra steps, yet she found that every few minutes there was something that she would want that if she had been on her feet she would have helped herself to, without realizing hardly that she had had a wish and gratified it. It worried her almost as much to do without what she wanted as to ask for it and feel that she was giving trouble, even although it was not considered as such.

"I don't see how people are ever patient when they are sick. I am sure I shall show how cross I am in a day or two more," she thought to herself on Thursday evening.

There had been no arrangement made for her class yet, and she had come to the conclusion that it would not be possible to get a teacher for them, and they would all be scattered and forget everything that they ever knew before she could get back to them. All that she had done in any of her undertakings would have to be done over again, for she was quite sure no one would take her place. She turned her face to the wall so that her mother could not see the

tears which would find their way down her cheeks, and gave herself up to her gloomy thoughts. Poor little Christie! She felt as if her little world could not move along without her, and it seemed like such a mistake to lay her aside.

"Christie, are you asleep, dear?" asked her mother softly, a little later.

Christie was so miserable that she was half determined not to answer, for she did not feel like talking. No one could comfort her, she thought, for no one could assure her that her work should not suffer through her absence. Her mother waited a moment for a reply, and then Christie thought better of her determination not to speak, and she answered quietly, "Yes, mother, what is it? I am not asleep."

"There is a young lady down-stairs who would like to see you if you feel able to see her. Her name is Miss Nelson."

"Yes, I think I would like to see her," Christie answered, not quite sure that she wanted to see any one, but yet feeling as if a chat with Miss Nelson might brighten her up a little.

"You look as if you had been crying," said Miss Nelson, after she had been in Christie's room a few minutes, her quick eyes spying traces of tears upon the flushed cheeks.

"I was foolish enough to cry a little," Christie said. "It wasn't because I was in pain though. I am not enough of a baby to cry about that, but I am so discouraged about all the things that I am

in the habit of doing that I can't do while I am sick."

"What, for instance?" asked Miss Nelson.

"The infant-class was troubling me to-day more than anything else," Christie replied. "I don't know who can take it, and I do so want it to have a good teacher, for they are such dear little tots."

Miss Nelson hesitated.

"I came to ask you something, but it is so hard that I am afraid that I shall go away without saying it."

"What is it?" asked Christie, smiling.

"I knew there was no one in the Sunday-school who would take that class, for every one is afraid of it. I was thinking that you might worry over it, and so I came. Now it seems like clear presumption for me to offer to take it, when I am such a poor teacher anyway and used to neglect that class so shamefully when I had it; but still, if you will trust me with the children and will give me some little idea of how you manage with them, I will do my very best with them till you can come back. I know them all, and I will be patient with them, and try to teach them what I can. Will it be any help to you to let me take them?"

"That would be so nice," Christie exclaimed. She was not afraid that Miss Nelson would neglect them or be impatient with these lambs of the flock, for she had had very different ideas of late concerning the duty of Sunday-school teachers, and was very

faithful with the class of little girls that had been assigned to her.

"What will you do with your class?" she asked a moment later.

"Mr. Moore told me that he would put them into a small class of children about the same age, and I am sure the children will be willing to make this arrangement for a little while."

"I wish I could tell you how you have relieved my mind," Christie said gratefully. "I can't tell you how cross and blue I have been all the afternoon because I could not see what was to become of my class while I was sick. I shall feel as if all my other troubles will be charmed away somehow, and I surely won't cry over them any more."

"I am so glad to have been of the least bit of help," said Miss Nelson. "Now I must go, for I am afraid I have stayed too long already. I wish I could bear some of the pain and confinement for you."

"You are doing a great deal more than that would be for me," Christie answered as she bade her friend farewell.

One burden had been lightened, and Christie thought self-reproachfully that she had not exercised any faith at all, but had worried just as if it had all depended upon herself.

Her circle of King's Daughters was the next thing that she puzzled over. Who would take care of them for a few weeks?

It was the very last person of whom Christie

would have thought herself who came to the rescue.

Mrs. Wilson heard through the doctor of Christie's anxiety about these girls, and making some inquiry into what work they generally did and how their meetings were conducted, she astonished Christie, and herself a little perhaps, by offering to meet with them until Christie should be well again.

"As a permanent leader I should be a disastrous failure," she said. "But I do hate to have you worry about them, and I know that for a few weeks I can manage to meet with them, and practise the hymns with them, and help them with anything else that they generally do. You have had too much to do lately anyway, and it will be good for some of us lazy ones to take your place for a little while, and then perhaps we can realize how much you do. I suppose you will find them generally demoralized by the time you get them back into your hands, but it will keep them together to have an older person meet with them, and that is something, I know. If it will set your mind the least bit more at ease it will be all I shall ask."

"You are so good!" said Christie gratefully. "You will be just the very one, for you can manage girls so nicely and they all like you."

She was glad that Mrs. Wilson's offer had come first, for a day or two later Miss Elliot called on the same errand, and while Christie appreciated her kindness in being willing to assume the burden, yet

she felt that the girls would not have welcomed Miss Elliot even as a temporary leader, and she would have scattered them instead of holding them together.

It was not altogether a surprise to her when Mrs. Bush told her that she would keep an eye upon the doings at the girls' reading-room, for that lady had become so interested in the girls and their doings that she was almost as much their friend as was Christie herself.

The girls did not mind her brusque manner, for they knew that she was very kind-hearted beneath her somewhat rough exterior, and they were very willing to have her take Mrs. Stanley's place till she should be able to come back again.

"I have found out that I can be spared," Christie said a week later to Mrs. Bateman. "When you advised me to lay aside some of my tasks, I really thought it would be impossible; and now you see I have had them all taken out of my hands, and everything goes on quite as well without me. I am almost disappointed to find out of how little use I am in the world. It would not make any real difference to any one whether I lived or died."

"Now you are undervaluing yourself, which is quite as bad as overestimating your own worth, though I do not say that you ever did that," said Mrs. Bateman, noticing a discouraged tone in Christie's voice. "Of course you are missed. We miss you in church and everywhere else. That your

place can be temporarily filled does not prove at all that you can be spared just as well as not. We may be able to spare the sunshine now and then for a couple of days, but that does not prove that we do not miss it nor that it does not brighten the world up when we do have it. Now, isn't that a pretty comparison? You ought to feel very much complimented at being likened to sunshine."

"I feel anything but sunshiny now," Christie said dolefully. "Oh, it is so hard to lie here and just be a bother to every one! I shall be so glad when I am well again. I never realized before half how hard it was to be sick."

"It is hard for us to realize things that have not come within our own experience," Mrs. Bateman replied. "It is hard to see too why some troubles are permitted to come. It is such a comfort to trust that it is all for the best. I know just how hard it is for you, Christie dear, to be laid aside from your life of active service even for these few weeks, but I know that it is because it is best for you, and that in this way God wants you to serve him. Remember,

"'He only knoweth how to serve
Who knoweth how to wait,'

and he is giving you something to do for him now that you could not do in health."

"But working is much easier than waiting," Christie sighed. "I really used to think that I was willing to do anything that God wanted me to, Mrs.

Bateman, but I find that I am not a bit willing to lie here and not do anything."

"You will learn patience," Mrs. Bateman answered, smoothing the troubled forehead with loving touch. "It is too hard a lesson to be learned all at once, but it will come at last."

CHAPTER XLIII.

WAITING.

Six weeks have passed away, but instead of finding Christie restored to health she is farther from recovery than when she first met with her accident. The fall had injured her more seriously than had been at first supposed, and an illness had resulted from her internal injuries and the jar of the fall that might confine her for weeks longer to her bed. If the knowledge of this had come to her suddenly it it would have been intolerably hard to bear, but it was only that the period of her real improvement seemed just as far off every day, and that she did not seem to gain any strength. At last she began to realize herself that she was not improving and that new pains divided her strength with the sprain which was still painful, and then the doctor told her that it might still be some time, how long he could not say, before she would be restored to health.

Christie often thought during the long days that followed, and perhaps she was right, that it would have been less hard to endure a serious illness that would have come to a crisis, and then terminated either one way or the other in a given length of time. In that case she would have been sufficiently ill not to mind the confinement so much, and each day

would have seemed so much nearer the end. It was very hard to face a lingering trouble which might drag its slow length along through the entire winter, and feel well enough to want to be active and energetic, while strength and nerves were only equal to a very slight exertion. She had never been conscious of possessing a nervous temperament before, for her perfect health had made her nerves her servants instead of her masters. Pain and restlessness soon gave them the control of the weak body, and sometimes Christie made up her mind that she preferred the days of actual pain to those days when with every nerve quivering she tried to control her impatience and the irritability which were growing apace. She mourned over them, poor child, and attributed them to her own wickedness of heart, instead of remembering that it was more physical than anything else. It was just as hard for her to do herself justice as to show it to any one else, when she was in this depressed, morbid condition.

"If I could only have mother with me!" she sighed again and again, feeling as if her mother's enforced absence was the last straw that made her burden unendurable. This was no less deplored by her mother than by herself, but it seemed to be necessary. When Mrs. Gilbert had been with Christie for nearly three weeks her father began to speak in his letters of not feeling well, and before long word was sent to Mrs. Gilbert by their family physician that her husband had been prostrated by typhoid fever, and

if it was possible for her to leave her daughter she was very much needed at home.

There was no question but that her mother was more needed there than with Christie, and indeed Christie herself would have been the last one to interpose an obstacle in the way of her mother's return, even if her actual need of her presence had been greater than it was. It was very hard to say good-bye to her, though, and since she had gone away Christie found the tedium of the sick-room harder than ever to bear. Howe was with her as much as he could be, but he had his hands full with his church work, and there was but very little time that he and Christie felt that they could take for each other's society. He had to spend the mornings in his study to prepare his sermons, and he could not get along with any less than five hours of preparation every day for his pulpit work.

He had set before himself the aim of being a pastor and preacher both and not neglecting the duties of either, therefore his afternoons were very much occupied with calls, so that an hour or two before tea-time was really about all that Christie saw of her husband during these days of invalidism. There were meetings of some kind nearly every night in the week, and while these meetings were not too onerous for any of the others who attended them, as no one else attended them all, yet they took up nearly every evening.

Christie would not have wanted her husband to

neglect a single one of his duties to stay with her, and she always wore a bright face when he was with her so that he should not know how lonely and blue she was when he was absent, but it cost her considerable effort not to complain.

Howe, too, tried to be as cheerful as possible, for he knew it was far harder for Christie than it was for him, but he missed her presence around the house and the comfort that she always inspired. In a thousand and one little ways, that he could hardly have told if he had been asked, he noticed her absence.

Hannah, to do her justice, tried to do as she knew Christie would have wished, and as far as it was possible the most minute directions for every detail of the housekeeping issued from the sick-room; but there was very much that only the mistress's hand and eye could remedy, and there was a cheerlessness about this housekeeping by proxy that both Howe and Christie felt, though they would not admit it.

It was such a change from the active, busy life that had scarcely a moment's leisure in it, that it was no wonder that Christie found it hard to adjust herself to it. It seemed a useless life, even although she tried to assure herself that it must be best, since it was what God planned for her. Even when we recognize and acknowledge a fact with our reason, it is not always an easy task to make our heart accord with it, and Christie found the comfort which she couldh ave carried to any one else in similar circum-

stances very hard to receive herself. She began to worry about her spiritual condition, for if she was a Christian, surely, she reasoned, she would not find it so hard to submit to illness and imprisonment, and she would not be so depressed and irritable if she had the love of God in her heart.

It was in the depths of one of these moods that the doctor found her one day. Howe had been out for some hours, so she had had an excellent opportunity to get as miserable as she could without being interrupted in her gloomy self-examination.

"What is the matter?" asked the doctor cheerily, as he found that she was not disposed to enter into conversation with him. "You haven't got that pain again, have you?"

"It's worse than any pain," answered Christie sorrowfully. "I hate to have you know what is the matter with me, and yet I believe I would feel better if I told you about it. It isn't of any use to tell Howe, for he would think I just imagined it, or was blue, and it is too real a thing to be argued away in that way."

"Why, what is this dreadful trouble?" asked the doctor sympathetically, though he did not seem as much impressed by its gravity as Christie would have liked.

"I have just found out such a dreadful thing lately," Christie began, her lips quivering as she spoke. "I am sure that I have been deceiving myself all along. I never have been a Christian after all, and

now I am so miserable that I don't know what to do."

Christie ended in a burst of tears. It was a relief to put her trouble into words, although she expected that the doctor would reprove her for having allowed herself to indulge in false hopes and think that she was a Christian when she had no right to bear the name. He was silent for a moment, and Christie was sure that he was trying to find words sufficiently severe in which to condemn her. Her face was hidden in the pillow and her tears were flowing fast.

"My dear child, your digestion is out of order," he said at last.

Christie had wrought herself up to such intensity of feeling that these words in the place of the rebuke she had expected brought her down to the commonplace with such a sudden revulsion of feeling that in spite of herself she burst into a half-hysterical laugh.

"Oh, I mean it," said the doctor; "and what is more, I want you to take my word for it until you are able to see it yourself as plainly as I do."

Christie shook her head.

"I suppose you will think I am obstinate, but it isn't that. I really know you are wrong and I am right about this matter. I ought to know the better."

"No, I think your physician knows the best in a case of this kind," he persisted. "I wish you would take my word for it, for I don't think you are open to conviction, no matter how clearly I may prove the

matter to you. What makes you so sure that you are not a Christian?"

"Because I don't feel so," Christie answered.

"Well, we all differ so in feelings, suppose you tell me, if you don't mind, just how you think a Christian feels."

"When I used to think I was a Christian I used to be happy all the time," Christie answered. "I was always glad to do what I thought the Lord wanted me to do. I felt sure of his love for me and of my love for him, and so I could not be anything but hopeful and happy all the time. Now I am perfectly miserable. I cannot feel willing to lie here all the time and neglect everything that I ought to be doing. I don't feel as if the Lord loved me, and I am sure that I cannot love him or I would not feel so bitterly about this trouble. Wouldn't you call all those dreadful feelings not being a Christian?"

"In those days when you were sure of being a Christian, I believe you enjoyed the best of good health, didn't you?" asked the doctor.

"Yes, I never knew what it was to have a pain or an ache," Christie answered, wondering what the doctor's question had to do with the matter under discussion.

"You had plenty of out-door exercise, companionship with congenial friends, occupation enough to keep your mind pleasantly employed, and a good digestion?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, my dear child, you might just as well have accused yourself of not being a Christian then as now. If you had wanted to accuse yourself in that way, you might have argued, 'It is not anything but my good health and my environments that makes me so happy and contented. I think it is my love for the Lord that makes me feel willing to submit to his will in all things, but it is really because he never sends me anything but what is pleasant; so how can I be sure that I am a Christian at all?' You are just as much of a Christian now as you were then, but you must bring your common-sense into your spiritual life, for you can't get along without it there any better than you can in temporal matters. Now for the first time in your life you are shut up in the house, away from the fresh air, the change of scene, and the variety of occupation that have always had a great deal to do with making you contented and happy. You are lonely a good deal of the time, you are nervous, and you bear considerable pain very bravely and uncomplainingly. Under those circumstances do you think it is reasonable to expect that your spiritual life should not be affected by your physical weakness and limitations? I have often noticed that the thermometer of spiritual life goes up or down according to the condition of the body. A bad digestion will naturally beget despondency, and it takes a stalwart saint to rejoice in the Lord when his liver is out of order. I know that sounds irreverent, but I don't mean it so. I

say solemnly and in all reverence that I believe people will be better, more hopeful and happier Christians, when they pay more attention to the laws of health and good hygiene; and I believe it to be a physical impossibility for any of us to rise to the highest plane of love and trust while our body is out of order and we are shut away from the fresh air and sunshine, which are God's best gifts to us. Don't you take this time to worry over whether you are a Christian or not. Declare that you are, and rest on that. This is a grand time to trust when you can't see. By and by, when you are well enough to take a brisk walk in this bracing winter air, then come to me and we will talk the matter over again if you still have any doubts. Why, a turn down to the corner and back again would send your despondency higher than a kite. Now isn't your digestion out of order again?"

"Yes," confessed Christie. "I couldn't eat much breakfast, and the little bit I did eat feels as if I had been eating stones or some other light diet."

"Exactly so," and the doctor nodded in triumph. "And yet you blame all this despondency upon your lack of love for the Lord. You love him just as much as I do, I am sure, but you are in the depths physically so you can't see it nor believe it. Now here is one prescription that I will leave at the drug-store to be filled and sent around to you, and another that I will leave with you, '*Don't worry.*' There haven't I given you quite a lecture? You see I don't

forget that I am one of the elders in the church, and so you come under my jurisdiction in more ways than that of a patient. Now I shall hope to hear a more cheerful report of you at dinner time, from Mrs. Bateman."

"Oh, is she coming to see me?" and Christie's face brightened up.

"Yes, and I think she will counteract the indigestion just as much as the medicine. Good-bye," and the doctor hurried away, leaving Christie to more cheerful reflections.

CHAPTER XLIV.

COMFORT.

It was some time before Mrs. Bateman came, and before Christie heard her voice in the hall below her head had begun to throb with the blinding pain that was of almost daily occurrence lately, and her nerves were all on edge by the hour of expectancy.

"Does your head ache so badly, dear child?" asked Mrs. Bateman, as she put her hand on the hot forehead. "Shall I be of any use to you if I stay, or will you be better alone?"

"That feels so good!" Christie said, as the soft hand passed back and forth with the touch that always seemed to her magnetic in drawing out pain. "I will just shut my eyes for a little while and then I believe it will all go away."

Half an hour later Christie opened her eyes with a smile, after a light doze into which she had fallen.

"You see what a magician you are," she said. "You have charmed away my headache. Now talk to me and make me feel good and happy if you can. I don't think any one else could, unless it might be the doctor. I think he dragged me out of the very deepest of the depths in which I fell to-day."

"I think I have something here that will comfort you in any pain," Mrs. Bateman replied.

"What is it?" Christie asked.

"It is a poem that was given to me only last evening, but I thought of you as I read it, and I wanted you to have it. I must leave it with you to read by yourself, for it is too long to read aloud to you, but there are just one or two little places that I want to read to you before I go, if you are sure it will not make your head ache."

"Please do read it all to me," Christie said. "Indeed I am sure it will not make my head ache."

"It is called 'Ugo Bassi's Sermon in the Hospital,' and it is a translation of a sermon upon the text, 'I am the true vine, and ye are the branches,' which was preached by Fra Ugo Bassi in a hospital in Rome. It was translated and put into blank verse by Eleanor Hamilton King. Speaking of pain, he says,

"But if this be the hardest ill of all
For mortal flesh and heart to bear in peace,
It is the one comes straightest from God's hand,
And makes us feel him nearest to ourselves.

"God gives us light and love and all good things
Richly for joy and power to use aright;
But then we may forget him in his gifts.
We cannot well forget the hand that holds
And pierces us and will not let us go,
However much we strive from under it.
If God speak to thee in the summer air,
The cool soft breath thou leanest forth to feel
Upon thy forehead, dost thou feel it God?
Nay, but the wind; and when heart speaks to heart
And face to face, when friends meet happily
And all is merry, God is also there;
But thou perceivest but thy fellow's part:
And when out of the dewy garden green
Some liquid syllables of music strike

A sudden speechless rapture through thy frame,
Is it God's voice that moves thee? Nay, the bird's,
Who sings to God and all the world and thee.
But when the sharp strokes flesh and heart run through
For thee, and not another—only known
In all the universe through sense of thine,
Not caught by eye or ear, not felt by touch
Nor apprehended by the spirit's sight,
But only by the hidden tortured nerves
In all their incommunicable pain—
God speaks himself to us, as mothers speak
To their own babes, upon the tender flesh
With fond familiar touches close and dear;
Because he cannot choose a softer way
To make us feel that he himself is near,
And each apart his own beloved and known.

"Sweet is it, when a babe opens its eyes,
Blue, smiling, to its mother's morning kiss;
But thou, when waking to the morning light
With unrefreshed and aching limbs, mayst feel
The heavy pressure of a constant pain
Upon thy forehead and the weary brows
Throbbing beneath an unabated load.
Is it not God's own very finger-tips
Laid on thee in a tender steadfastness—
The light and careful touches which to thee
Seem heavy, because measured to thy strength,
With none to spare? And yet he does not fail
For thy impatience, but stands by thee still,
Patient, unfaltering, till thou too shalt grow
Patient, and wouldst not miss the sharpness grown
To custom which assures him at thy side,
Hand to thy hand and not far off in heaven.

"And when the night comes, and the weariness
Grows into fever, and thy anguish grows
Fiercer, and thou beseechest Him with tears,
'Depart from me, O Lord, and let me rest.'
He will not leave thee; He will not depart,
Nor loose thee nor forget thee, but will clasp
Thee closer in the thrilling of his arms
No prayer of ours shall ease before their time.
He gives his angels charge of those who sleep,
But he himself watches with those who wake.

* * * * * * * *

If thou, impatient, shouldst let slip thy cross,
Thou wilt not find it in this world again,
Nor in another; here and here alone
Is given thee to suffer for God's sake.
In other worlds we shall more perfectly
Serve him and love him, praise him, work for him,
Grow near and nearer him with all delight;
But then we shall not any more be called
To suffer, which is our appointment here.
Canst thou not suffer then one hour, or two?
If he should call thee from thy cross to-day,
Saying, ''Tis finished; that hard cross of thine
From which thou prayest for deliverance,'
Thinkest thou not some passion of regret
Would overcome thee? Thou wouldst say, 'So soon?
Let me go back and suffer yet awhile
More patiently; I have not yet praised God.'
And he might answer to thee, 'Never more;
All pain is done with.' Whensoe'er it comes,
The summons that we look for, it will seem
Soon, yea, too soon. Let us take heed in time,
That God may now be glorified in us;
And while we suffer let us set our souls
To suffer perfectly, since this alone,
The suffering which is this world's special grace,
May here be perfected and left behind."

"That is the most comforting poem that I ever read or heard," said Christie, as the sweet voice of the reader died away. "I wish that every one who has to suffer any kind of pain anywhere might hear that. It is so beautiful to think of the pain being God's touch upon us. If that does not help me to be patient, nothing will. Thank you very much for bringing it to me, Mrs. Bateman."

Did you ever have a thought grow into a part of your life? If you have, you can understand how every word of that beautiful poem grew into Christie's heart until it became a part of her very self and taught her patience and submission. Not all at

once. It was too great a gain to be lightly won, and it took days and weeks of weariness and pain before she could wholly grasp its meaning. In the enforced quietude and hours of loneliness she learned very much that could never have come to her in the bustle of active life, and when health and strength came back to her with the budding life of the springtide, she did not feel that her winter had been wasted, even although she had no gathered sheaves to show.

Carefully she took up her duties again, trying to measure her strength more accurately, so that she might not undertake more than she could perform nor undertake new duties to the neglect of the old. The happy home life began again, and with a quiet, steady radiance the light from the Manse shone out and brightened the lives of all who came within its reach.

It was like a light-house whose guiding light cheers and encourages the mariner, and many a discouraged heart was comforted by the sunlight of love which illumined this home. It had been consecrated to the Master's use, and in his name any guest whom he sent to the door was welcomed gladly and lovingly as his representative, while the husband and wife in their home-making remembered,

"I was a stranger, and ye took me in. * * * * Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

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